

# DOUBLING DOWN on the UPF BOMB PLANT

**T**HE HEADLINE ON THE PRESIDENT’S BUDGET proposal to increase spending on the Uranium Processing Facility nuclear bomb plant could be “*Déjà vu* all over again.” On one chart, the budget request, released February 10, shows a 98.9% increase in construction funding for the troubled bomb plant slated to replace aging nuclear weapons production facilities at the Y12 complex in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

The budget proposal, if approved by Congress, would spend more than half a billion dollars on the UPF project next year, starting October 1, 2016. The increase, from the 2016 construction appropriation of \$289 million to \$575 million, is to “complete the design of the UPF, and associated buildings, sup-

port structures and process equipment,” along with “continued construction in approved subprojects supporting UPF infrastructure and site preparation.”

Four new UPF “subprojects” appear in the budget, making it more difficult to track UPF funding. Development of the new, high-tech equipment planned for the UPF is in a different line item. Major highly enriched uranium operations that were planned for the UPF are being shifted into other, old and unsafe buildings. The cost of upgrading those buildings is not included in the UPF budget any more.

All of this begs a critical question: Are these numbers credible?

According to these latest budget projections, the cost of designing the UPF will be 47% of the total cost of the building. Usually, design costs account for 3-5% of the total cost of a construction project. Yet, astonishingly, the NNSA says with a straight face they will complete the UPF for \$6.5 billion, and an equally straight-faced Senator Lamar Alexander says he believes them.

When the *Knoxville News-Sentinel’s* Frank Munger reported the increase was apparently to “accelerate” the UPF project, we were reminded of a time, not so long ago (2012, to be exact) when NNSA gave its Oak Ridge bomb plant a budget boost intended to “accelerate construction” of the UPF.

What followed, just months later, was the announcement of the space/fit fiasco. The design team announced, after completing 85% of the design, the building was too small for the equipment it would need. NNSA later admitted that boo-boo cost taxpayers \$539 million dollars; it also set construction

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY  
FY 2017 Statistical Table by Appropriation  
(dollars in thousands - OMB Scoring)

	FY 2015 Enacted Approp.	FY 2015 Current Approp.	FY 2016 Enacted Approp.	FY 2017 Congressional Request	FY 2017 vs. FY 2016	
					\$	%
Uranium processing facility (UPF)						
06-D-141-FED/Construction, UPF						
Y-12, Oak Ridge, TN.....	---	---	289,128	575,000	+285,872	+98.9%
06-D-141-02 Site preparation, UPF						
Y-12, Oak Ridge, TN.....	---	---	140,872	---	-140,872	-100.0%
Total, Uranium processing facility (UPF).....	---	---	430,000	575,000	+145,000	+33.7%

**NNSA can’t start construction of the UPF without completing an environmental analysis process and preparing a detailed cost estimate. They have done neither. But as the lines from the budget show, they did manage to spend \$140 million on “site preparation.”**

If you take the total 2016 appropriation (construction + site prep), the increase from \$430 million to \$575 million for the total UPF project is not as dramatic, a mere 33.7% increase.

The numbers are all part of a shell game being played, at taxpayer expense, to hide the cost of the modernization of Y12 so the US can continue making nuclear weapons for decades. Parts of the project have been taken off the UPF books—though the original \$1.5 billion cost estimate was supposed to cover it all.

back by several years.

Back then we noted that DOE Guidance 413.3-5 cautions that efforts to speed projects up “increase project risk, often lead to schedule delays and will likely result in overall higher costs for the project.”

**FOR WHAT?**

There are two answers to that question.

If you said: “We have no idea,” you get a star. That’s because no plan for the UPF has been approved by the NNSA. That’s right—more than \$2 billion has been spent on the bomb plant, but the current design has not yet received Critical Decision-1 approval from the Secretary of Energy.

If you said, “On a bomb plant we don’t need,” you also get a gold star. When the NNSA assessed the environmental impact of its first UPF plan, it noted it is possible to maintain a safe, secure stockpile with a minimal facility that would process 10 warheads a year. Nevertheless, the UPF was sized to manufacture 80 warhead secondaries a year. Consider it an investment in Bechtel, contractor for the UPF.

Further evidence that we don’t need the bomb plant comes from what we can’t see.

For two years running, the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee has required the Department of Energy’s National Nuclear Security Administration to justify the need for the UPF by preparing a study documenting the need for the complete replacement of nuclear weapon secondaries during Life Extension upgrades. One would think such a justification, if it existed, would be easy to prepare and present—to date, NNSA has produced no report.

**THE BIG PICTURE**

The budget request for increased UPF funding is part of an overall increase in nuclear weapons spending. The Department of Energy budget request increases spending on nuclear

weapons by \$400 million, a 4.5% boost, breaking the \$9 billion barrier for the first time. This does not include increases in federal salaries and expenses in the NNSA budget—an additional \$12 billion (13.5% increase).

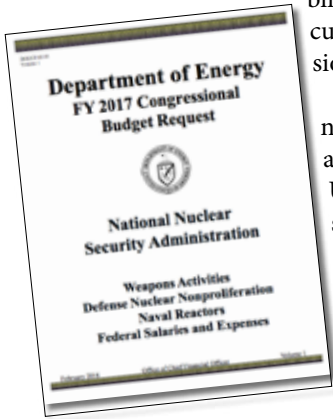
In the meantime, in case you are wondering where the extra UPF money is coming from, funding for cleanup at contaminated nuclear sites is being cut by almost a billion dollars (-\$773 million), or 12.5%.

In Oak Ridge, cleanup funding for the Reservation is being slashed by \$72 million.

Funding for dismantlement work gets a 33% boost in the budget request, which sounds like good news. Unfortunately, this represents a grand total of \$69 million spent on dismantlement—compared to \$7 billion spent for research, design and production activities.

What’s being done with all the production money? More than a billion dollars is slated for “Life extension programs and major alterations” for the B61, the W76, the W88-Alt 370, the W80-4, and the “cruise missile warhead life extension study.”

Additional stockpile systems supported in the budget include the W78, W80 and W83—“Stockpile systems” receives \$443 million in this budget. It’s a budget only a Cold Warrior could love.



**What once was one project that would capture all enriched uranium production operations is now a multi-building project that will press deteriorating buildings into service for decades.**

**WHAT TO DO .....**

OREPA has made numerous attempts to interest national media in the UPF boondoggle. Journalists profess interest but say they can not get their editors to commit to a story.

OREPA has also launched the Tell the Taxpayer campaign (see p.3) in an effort to embarrass Alexander into doing his job. No dice.

We are expanding the campaign this spring, while Congress is debating the budget. And we will send a strong delegation to Washington, DC, in April to press for answers.

You can help. Here are three key things you can do:

1. Support OREPA. It costs money to go to DC, and it will cost more money to challenge NNSA in court.

2. Tell your friends—the technical term is “organize,” but really it’s as simple as sharing information with people you know and asking them to help you make a difference.

3. Write a letter. To your local paper (name your Senator or Representative in the letter so their staff will clip it for them to see). Or to your Senator or Representative—they like to get email through their web site; if you’re on line, write your letter then cut-and-paste it in the box on their web site.

# Senator refuses to Tell the Taxpayer

It is fair to say, as the UPF nuclear bomb plant cost approaches the \$3 billion mark, there is absolutely no public accountability for the money being spent.

OREPA has set out to change that with the Tell the Taxpayer campaign.

We started by focusing on Tennessee Senator Lamar Alexander, chair of the Appropriations Committee's Energy and Water subcommittee in the Senate. That means he oversees the Department of Energy's budget, including funding for the UPF bomb plant.



As chair of the committee, Alexander holds secret meetings with UPF project staff to get updates on activities.

So in November of last year, we held meetings to educate people in East Tennessee (Alexander comes from Maryville, TN, about 30 minutes from the Y12 Nuclear Weapons Complex in Oak Ridge) and asked them to write letters to Alexander asking for answers.

More than 100 letters were written to the Senator during the month. Even as the campaign continued, people began to get his response. A form letter, but one created to answer us. In the letter, the Senator assured his correspondents the UPF was "on time and on budget."

So OREPA wrote to him asking for more information. Specifically, we asked what "on time" means—we were curious because no schedule for the project has been released. We also asked how the project could be "on budget" when NNSA has released no numbers.

We asked fourteen other detailed questions, too. And we went to his office building with Mr. Moneybags, to send a clear message—we deserve answers.

In reply, we got the same form letter as everyone else—except the paragraph about "on time and on budget" was cut out! There's a simple reason—no credible schedule or budget for the UPF exists.

This matters, because time is money—the longer the UPF project stretches out, the more it will cost.

What's more, last May Senator Alexander indicated the design for the UPF would be finished in the fall of 2016, but the FY 2017 budget pushes that date out by a full year!

No real cost estimate for the UPF exists, either, despite Senator Alexander's word that he is insisting the project be capped at \$6.5 billion. NNSA says

it won't hazard a real guess at the cost of the project until the design is 90% complete.

Alexander's promised fiscal constraints are a brazen fiction. If the cost of the UPF design is any indicator, the total cost of the UPF will be well over \$20 billion. But Alexander won't have to worry about missing the mark—he'll be long-retired before the final bills are in. Taxpayers, on the other hand, will still be paying.

## YOUR TURN

Senator Alexander no longer has to pretend to be accountable to his constituents. He has abandoned all pretense to fiscal conservatism to take care of his corporate contributors—maybe he wants a lucrative seat on Bechtel's board when he "retires" from the Senate? After all, he sat on Martin Marietta's Board of Directors when they managed the Y12 Nuclear Weapons Plant and got a \$95K payout for stepping down when Martin Marietta merged with Lockheed.

So if we're going to get answers, we're going to get them from someone else. That's where you come in—we're asking OREPA members across the country to demand accountability for the \$2 billion already spent on the bomb plant to nowhere.

We've created a handy information sheet with talking points you can use to write your letter. You'll find it at [www.orepa.org](http://www.orepa.org).

We've also created a facebook page (cleverly named Tell the Taxpayer) where you can report your action and track what others are doing.

It's clear, from Alexander's stonewalling to the President's budget, that powerful forces want to spend billions on this bomb plant. We can be more powerful, together. And we can stop the UPF.



**Alexander's reply to our sixteen questions is utterly devoid of substance.**

**Outside Senator Alexander's Knoxville office in December, "Lamar" had greetings for all the gathered OREPA members—and a \$2 billion check for Mr. Moneybags, decked out in top hat and splendid Lockheed/Bechtel trousers.**



# Waking Up to Live the Dream

**S**OMEHOW, DURING THE TENURE OF THE PRESIDENT WHO HAS DONE MORE TO address the persistent cancer of racism in our culture and society, and who has done it in thoughtful, human, passionate ways, the ugliness of racism continues to erupt across the landscape.

It may be that Barack Obama's presence in the White House alone has served to expose the reality of racism that continues to bear down on people of color every second of every day. Or it may be that same presence has created a backlash fueled by feelings of insecurity and ignorance, flames fed by xenophobic talk radio hosts and presidential candidates, and unleashed bigotry on social media. Or all of the above.

More than a decade ago OREPA's Board of Directors began to explore the intersection of race and our organizing for nuclear abolition, asking ourselves why we are an almost completely "white" organization and movement.

I remember during that time being struck by a comment made by Secretary of Energy Hazel O'Leary as we sat in her office in Washington, DC. "Some communities," she said, "have more emergent needs."

During our process, which included anti-racism/anti-oppression trainings for staff and board, we concluded that addressing racism in the context of our nuclear accountability work required at least two things of us: 1] engaging people of color where they are, and 2] being allies of people of color in their struggles.

We also came to see that addressing racism is on ongoing piece of our work, and that racism is, for the most part, a "white" problem—that is, people who believe they are white are responsible for racism; people of color bear the burden.

So we set out to bridge the chasm that separates people in our community—a gulf that is geographic,

economic, political, cultural, social and religious. We decided to start with conversation, trying to bring people together to talk about important issues.

This year we hosted our ninth annual commu-

nity conversation, an event that has been adopted by the Greater Knoxville Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Commission as one of its slate of annual events.

More than a hundred people gathered at the Beck Cultural Center on January 15 to hear presentations by Andre Canty of Knoxville's Black Lives Matter and Elizabeth Wright of Showing Up for Racial Justice and to spend an hour talking around the table with our neighbors about the ever-present issues of race in our community.

Three days later, we were in the street, on a frigid Monday morning, for the MLK parade. OREPA members—and one draftee—strapped themselves into harnesses that held giant papier mâché heads and were wrapped in costumes.

An hour later, children and grown-ups alike were cheering Martin Luther King, Jr, Gandhi, Rosa Parks, and Sarah Moore Greene, stepping into the street to shake a hand or pose for a picture. The tall puppets were led by two smaller puppeteers representing the four little girls killed in the 1963 Birmingham church bombing who carried the OREPA banner. Our delegation was trailed by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Committee of East Tennessee.

Showing up is an absolute minimum; engaging is a second step; getting involved in organizing with allies comes next. OREPA continues to do these crucial things and to look for other opportunities to integrate our work with other efforts to create the world we want to live in.



**Celebrating MLK in Knoxville—right: Gathered at the Beck Center for a conversation about Waking up to Live the Dream; we heard from a leader of the local Black Lives Matter movement and then engaged in discussion. Below: Frigid weather cut down numbers, but OREPA members carried on our tradition of marching in the Knoxville MLK parade, to the delight of onlookers young and old.**



February 2016

Dear OREPA Fellow Travelers,

How do you define amazing?

For the last ten years, through some of the most difficult economic conditions in recent memory, OREPA has not only survived, we have built our strength—and we've done it almost entirely on the contributions of our members. Our amazing members.

We are truly a grassroots organization—our goals and strategies are developed and implemented by regular people who volunteer their time and energy to keep OREPA powerful and effective. That's amazing, too.

We have one staff person, our Coordinator. The title matters to us—our staff is not a Director who runs the organization, he works to make it possible for all of us to do our part in stopping weapons production, building nonviolent community, and advocating for the earth.

***Meeting the Challenge***

As we plunge into 2016, we face three major challenges. Meeting them will require an even deeper commitment from all of us.

1. Stopping the bomb plant. We have to up our game—the budget this year will have \$575,000,000 for the UPF. That's about 10,000 times what OREPA raises each year.

To mount a successful challenge, we need the resources to take the NNSA to court when the case is “ripe,” as the lawyers put it. We hope that will be this year or next. We'll have a very strong case, but only if we have the funds for top notch legal representation.

2. The future. The generation that understands the threat of nuclear weapons is getting a little gray (peek in the mirror if you don't believe me). OREPA wants to develop a new generation of leadership for the ongoing struggle to rid the world of nuclear weapons. We believe that will require an investment in staffing—an organizer—and the resources to do real organizing.

We intend to launch a significant campaign this year to raise money to support youth organizing.

3. Fundraising in an election year. OREPA and other nonprofits who labor year after year, often against the resistance of a bipartisan political establishment, usually take a fundraising hit during election years.

We think it matters who wins elections, and we think it's important to invest in the outcomes we want to see. But we want to encourage you to maintain your support in this election year for the ongoing work of nonprofits who plug away day in and day out, elections or not.

***Together, we will***

I am confident OREPA can—and will—meet the challenges of this year with the support of all of our amazing members.

I hope you will join me to make our OREPA stronger than ever. And you can multiply your support if you will invite others to become part of this movement with you. I promise you, along with rest of OREPA's Board and our Coordinator, we will use your investment wisely.

Sincerely,



Kevin Collins, President  
OREPA Board of Directors

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*you can donate on line:*  
[www.orepa.org](http://www.orepa.org)  
*all gifts tax-deductible*



# OREPA celebrates The Emancipators!

**I**F YOU'VE BEEN TO AN OREPA EVENT in the last ten years, chances are you've heard the Emancipators lifting spirits and creating small harmonic miracles for occasions of all sizes.

This year, OREPA is delighted to celebrate the Emancipators with the 2016 Peacemaker Award. The celebration will be held Saturday, February 27, 7:00pm at St. James Episcopal Church in Knoxville, and everyone is welcome. In addition to great food and fabulous company, Candie and Evan Carawan will join us to provide some music, backed up, no doubt, by the Emancipators.

Anchored by the musical talents of Larry Osborne and Mitzi Wood-Von Mizener, the Emancipators have had an evolving roster of musicians, adding and subtracting as talent moves in and out of the group.

Currently, the lineup includes Larry, Mitzi, Durant Thompson, Kevin Collins and the latest addition, Mark Dumond on keyboard and a bit of percussion.

The Emancipators pay homage with their name to progressive activism in East Tennessee that goes back centuries—the original Emancipator was an 1820 abolitionist newspaper.

That's only part of what makes the Emancipators a treasure—they don't just bring music to the movement, they live in the movement. Their music is about who they are, whether they are singing about peace, the environment, justice, love, or just plain having fun.

OREPA has celebrated peacemakers in East Tennessee since 1999; the event doubles as a fundraiser. Tickets are available at the door —\$25 for adults, \$5 for students and children; \$50 maximum per family. But if you don't have the money, come anyway to join in the celebration.

The musician Harry Chapin said we all must work to create the world we want our children to live in. The Emancipators are a great example of Harry's charge, and we celebrate them for it.

OREPA's Newsletter is published at least four times a year by the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

The newsletter is also available on-line at [www.orepa.org](http://www.orepa.org)

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OREPA is a member of the  
ALLIANCE FOR NUCLEAR ACCOUNTABILITY



Playing in Alvin K. Bissell Park in Oak Ridge during the May 2015 Action for Disarmament, the Emancipators are, from left: Durant Thompson, Mitzi Wood-Von Mizener, Kevin Collins and Larry Osborne.

## TAKING THE MESSAGE TO DC

The damage is done in Oak Ridge, but the decisions are made in Washington, DC.

That's why OREPA is taking our message to Washington, DC again this year to participate in the Alliance for Nuclear Accountability's DC Days—a day of intensive training followed by three days of meetings with Congressional and Administration decision-makers.

We'll be talking about the Uranium Processing Facility, and we'll be joined by dozens of activists from across the country who will help us carry the message to leaders and staff on key Congressional committees as well as to oversight boards and Administration officials. We'll be working to take UPF construction money out of the budget and to push decision-makers to address a dangerous shortfall in dismantlement capacity.

In the past, OREPA has found that many in Washington are woefully ignorant of what actually happens in Oak Ridge—too often the people they rely on for information are the same people who write campaign checks.

Which is why it is so important for OREPA's voices to be heard, in person, in meetings on Capitol Hill and across Washington, DC.

Last year, seven OREPA members made the trip; this year eight have signed up to go so far. DC Days is April 17-20. If you are interested in being part of the advocacy effort, you can check out the DC Days info on the Alliance for Nuclear Accountability web site, [www.ananuclear.org](http://www.ananuclear.org) or contact OREPA at [orep@earthlink.net](mailto:orep@earthlink.net).

DC Days can be hard on the feet, but it is good for the soul. We come away tired and energized at the same time, clearer about the challenges before us and also more aware that we are part of a wider community working to stop the nuclear weapons madness.

