



The Secretary of Energy
Washington, D.C. 20585

December 19, 2006

The Honorable Barack Obama
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-6050

Dear Senator Obama:

This is in response to your November 13, 2006, letter regarding your request for clarification of reports that the Department of Energy is considering the sale of its surplus mercury.

The Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration is currently storing approximately 1,200 metric tons of elemental mercury at the Y-12 National Security Complex in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. This mercury was used during the Cold War in the production of enriched lithium, a product used in the atomic weapons program. Following the shutdown of the lithium enrichment process in 1963, the mercury was placed in safe storage and subsequently declared surplus.

The Department's last sale of mercury occurred in 1993. Over the past several years, the Department has been evaluating disposition options for the surplus mercury, taking into account the impacts that releases of mercury may have on human health and the environment. In recognition of these concerns, the surplus mercury at Y-12 will remain in storage. The Department has no current plans to sell this inventory.

If you have any further questions, please contact me or Ms. Jill Sigal, Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs at (202) 586-5450.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Samuel W. Bodman".

Samuel W. Bodman

