CLEAN SMART Act

Background: The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), acting through the Office of Environmental Management (EM), has the monumental task of finishing cleanup of our nation's environmental legacy from the Manhattan Project and the Cold War. Decommissioning the fifteen cleanup sites that remain—which include excess plutonium and uranium, contaminated facilities, polluted soil and groundwater, and more—will be one of the most technically complex challenges for the federal government. Costs to finish cleanup continue to grow and are now estimated to reach a staggering $700 billion for a completion date near the end of the century.

The federal government must leverage the best available science and technology to improve the effectiveness of current cleanup operations—and in the process, save taxpayers billions and shave years off the cleanup schedule. However, according to the National Academies and the U.S. Government Accountability Office, EM continues to face challenges coordinating its existing R&D investments, ensuring the full range of research needs are being pursued, and incentivizing contractors to ultimately deploy innovations at the field level.

To confront the challenge ahead, DOE established the Network of National Laboratories for Environmental Management and Stewardship in 2021. This partnership has marshalled the unmatched expertise of the National Laboratory system to accelerate technology development and enhance strategic coordination—from independent technical reviews of cleanup progress, to helping contractors adopt new treatment alternatives, to developing R&D roadmaps that tackle complex challenges like soil and groundwater contamination. With greater support, the Network has potential to close large gaps between research to operations and achieve significant cost savings for taxpayers.

Executive Summary: The *Combining Laboratory Expertise to Accelerate Novel Solutions for Minimizing Accumulated Radioactive Toxins (CLEAN SMART) Act* would build on the success of EM's National Laboratory Network to accelerate the development, demonstration, and deployment of breakthrough technologies and innovations for legacy nuclear waste cleanup.

Specifically, the *CLEAN SMART Act* would:
- Codify and fund the Network of National Laboratories for Environmental Management and Stewardship;
- Improve interagency coordination on environmental management research, including on areas of basic research;
- Direct DOE to maintain a comprehensive technology development and deployment plan that promotes the full range of R&D options; and
- Mandate corrective actions when sites exceed cost thresholds to mitigate cost overruns, incorporating recommendations from the U.S. Government Accountability Office.