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**Re: Cheney Disposal Cell Reauthorization to Operate**

February 18, 2026

United States Senate  
Committee on Energy & Natural Resources  
304 Dirksen Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Honorable Members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources:

I am writing to express my strong support for federal legislation to reauthorize the U.S. Department of Energy to operate the Cheney Disposal Cell (a.k.a., Grand Junction Disposal Site) in Mesa County, Colorado beyond its current expiration date of September 30, 2031. Extending this authorization is critical to protecting public health, maintaining environmental safety, and avoiding prohibitive costs for City of Durango municipal infrastructure projects and Durango's residents, businesses, and landowners.

The need for this facility stems from the legacy of mining in our region, including operations throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Durango. Unbeknownst of the health risks, these mill tailings were widely used as construction fill for homes, businesses, and infrastructure throughout Durango and the Western Slope of Colorado. These tailings emit radon gas and gamma radiation, which we now know pose significant health risks when trapped inside or near structures. As local governments and private owners across the Western Slope develop land, we continue to encounter this radioactive waste that must be managed safely. City of Durango construction operations as well as private construction and development still encounter issues where mitigation, removal, and disposal of these materials are necessary. Indeed, we have a prominent non-profit organization in town dealing with such an issue right now.

Currently, this is the only facility in our region authorized to accept and properly manage this waste. Allowing the facility to close while it still has capacity would have severe economic and environmental consequences for our community. Without this facility, the nearest alternative is the Clive Disposal Site in Utah, which would vastly increase costs for transportation and disposal. Without a local and affordable disposal option, there is a substantial risk that radioactive materials would be illegally dumped in open spaces or on private properties. This could have consequences for our region's water supply as well as the health of our agricultural lands.

This legislation to extend the Department of Energy's authority to operate the Cheney facility ensures that we can manage the long-term legacy of the uranium boom and mining in Western Colorado. We appreciate your leadership and consideration of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

José R. Madrigal  
City Manager  
City of Durango, Colorado