



**ACCOUNTABILITY · INTEGRITY · RESPECT**

Board of County Commissioners  
Matt Salka, Chair  
Elizabeth Philbrick, Vice Chair  
Marsha Porter-Norton, Commissioner

1101 East 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave  
Durango, CO 81301  
(970)382-6219

February 11, 2026

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

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

The La Plata County Board of County Commissioners would like to express our strong support for federal legislation to reauthorize the U.S. Department of Energy to operate the Cheney Disposal Cell in Grand Junction, 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 the State of Colorado.

The need for this facility stems from the legacy of uranium milling in the region impacting La Plata County. Before the health risks were understood, these sandy tailings were widely used as construction fill for homes, businesses, and infrastructure throughout La Plata County and the Western Slope of Colorado. These tailings emit radon gas and gamma radiation, which 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.

The Cheney Disposal Cell is the only facility in Colorado authorized to receive this radioactive waste. However, the Department of Energy's authority to operate the disposal site expires on September 30, 2031. Currently, the facility has the capacity to accept waste for approximately 75 more years based on historical volumes.

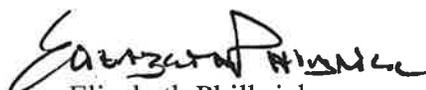
Allowing the facility to close while it still has capacity would have severe economic and environmental consequences for La Plata County. Without the Cheney facility, the nearest alternative is the Clive Disposal Site in Utah, which would significantly increase costs for transportation and disposal. Without a local and affordable disposal option, there is risk that radioactive materials would be illegally dumped in open spaces.

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 in Western Colorado. We appreciate your leadership and consideration of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

LA PLATA COUNTY  
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

  
Matt Salka  
Chair

  
Elizabeth Philbrick  
Vice Chair

  
Marsha Porter-Norton  
Commissioner