

## Tennessee Valley Corridor Conference Highlights Nuclear Issues

Despite the budget-cutting frenzy ongoing in Congress, there was support at the Tennessee Valley Corridor conference for the Obama administration's pledge to seek \$85 billion in funding to build a premier uranium facility at Y-12 in Oak Ridge. Part of that funding — \$3 billion to \$5 billion — would rebuild the 59-year-old Y-12 uranium processing facility and modernize it. The modernization would provide technologically advanced capabilities to process uranium, dismantle old warhead parts and make new parts.

Tom D'Agostino, under secretary for nuclear security and the administrator of the Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration, told the group that the 8,000 people who work at Y-12 to take care of the nation's uranium stockpile need a newer facility for safety and national security. "Think about it. Even if we start today and go full guns to get this uranium processing back up, we're still going to be in the same building that was built in 1952 for another eight to 10 years," he said. "That will be about 70 years in the same building. The tax-payers have gotten a good deal out of that facility."

He called the Y-12 work force the nation's nuclear counter-terrorism experts, and said they need a modern appropriately sized facility "to do the kind of nuclear counter-terrorism work that this nation demands." U.S. Rep. Scott DesJarlais, R-Tenn., who has been vocal about reducing the nation's debt, said he supports that nuclear spending. "I will work with the Tennessee congressional delegation to make sure that the Y-12 complex is sufficiently funded as it plays a critical role as part of our national security infrastructure," he said. U.S. Rep. Chuck Fleischmann, R-Tenn., who also has insisted America get its fiscal house in order, is another supporter of nuclear spending, according to his spokesman Jordan Powell.

In another conference session, TVA President and CEO Tom Kilgore told participants about the Tennessee Valley Authority's new 20-year energy plan, which calls for increasing the utility's generation of nuclear power and decreasing its use of coal-fired plants. "We have one of the oldest coal fleets in the nation. It's time to retire some of those," he said. "That will give us cleaner air."