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DANVILLE VIRGINIA

Letter to the Editor

To the Editor,

Firstly, I lived for 15 years in Lynchburg and my son lives in Charlottesville. I found that Anne Cockrell's May 4 letter to the editor was a rash of unfounded comparisons between the environmental effects of uranium mines and coal mines.

There is a world of difference.

First, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission is involved when the ore is processed and chemically recovered. The NRC has an outstanding record for safety and protection of the health. The uranium mines of today are light years ahead of the uranium mines of the Cold War because of the NRC involvement. The radiation hazard of uranium is low because uranium has little penetrating radiation and only moderate non-penetrating radiation.

The uranium mining industry has come a long way in the last 50 years with regard to their environmental impact on their surroundings.

Virginia Uranium Inc. has raised the bar even further by agreeing to fund a National Academy of Sciences (NAS) National Research Council (NRC) study to help the Commonwealth of Virginia determine whether uranium mining, milling and processing can be undertaken in a manner that safeguards the environment, health and well being of Virginia citizens.

I have served on an NAS NRC study and can tell you that it will be thorough and will leave no stone unturned. Additionally, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has agreed to fund another NAS NRC study which will be looking at whether there are any

health effects around current nuclear fuel cycle facilities.

This last study will update previous studies which showed that there were no health effects around nuclear fuel cycle facilities. To try to compare health effects, as the letter states, in the poverty stricken coal mining areas of West Virginia to uranium mining in Virginia is an unjustified leap and one that intelligent people should ignore until the National Academy studies come out.

JAMES TULENKO

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Editor's Note: Tulenko is a professor at the University of Florida, where he is the director of the Laboratory for Development of Advanced Nuclear Fuels and Materials.
