



**Department of Energy**  
**National Nuclear Security Administration**  
Washington, DC 20585

May 29, 2009

Ms. Danielle Brian  
Executive Director  
Project on Government Oversight  
1100 G Street NW, Suite 900  
Washington, D.C. 20005-3806

Dear Ms. Brian:

This is in response to your letter of May 6, 2009, concerning the National Ignition Facility (NIF). I share your stated goals of achieving a more effective, open and accountable government. The NIF Construction Project is now complete, ahead of schedule and within the cost established in its 2001 goal. While we acknowledge that there were problems in the early phases of the Project, in 2001 the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) restructured the management and oversight of the Project and set new goals for cost and schedule. Those revised goals have been met, and this Project has been managed effectively in the years since. Confirmation that the NIF Construction Project has met all of its specifications (as established in 2001) has been provided by both internal teams and external review bodies.


A number of important success criteria, such as total laser energy into the target chamber, have been met ahead of schedule. We believe that the record of the NIF Construction Project from 2001 to its completion this year is excellent. The award was recently presented to the NNSA Federal manager for Federal oversight of the Construction Project in the period from 2001 to completion and is justified given the record described above. The award was given to this individual and not to the NIF Construction Project as a whole.

It is important to note the distinction between the construction of the NIF laser (often referred to as the "NIF Project") and the use of the NIF in the pursuit of ignition (which is designated as the National Ignition Campaign or NIC). This Campaign is on schedule to perform the first ignition attempt experiment in 2010. The achievement of thermonuclear ignition in the laboratory will provide a key tool for maintaining a safe and secure U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile.



If you need additional information, please contact me or Mr. James B. Lambert, Acting Director, Office of Congressional, Intergovernmental and Public Affairs, at (202) 586-7332.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Phillip A. Niedzielski-Eichner for". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Phillip A. Niedzielski-Eichner  
Assistant Deputy Administrator  
for Strategic Planning, Resources &  
Integration