October 3, 1997

The Honorable Federico Peña
Secretary of Energy
Forrestal Building
1000 Independence Ave. S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Secretary Peña:

The approaching conclusion of the agreed design activity for the International Thermonuclear Engineering Reactor has led to rumors of further funding reductions in Fusion Energy Sciences. We are concerned that reductions would endanger the intellectual vitality of this area of science and are writing to express our strong support for Fusion Energy Sciences. This is an essential element of your Department's effort to advance fundamental science and conduct basic research across a broad range of disciplines.

Last year, the Department of Energy redirected the fusion program from an energy development program to a science-based program with three goals: (1) advance plasma science in pursuit of national science and technology goals, (2) identify and study fusion science, technology, and plasma confinement innovations, and (3) explore the science and technology of energy producing plasmas, as an international partner. The redirection is consistent with key recommendations of the National Research Council's 1995 report, *Plasma Science: From Fundamental Research to Technological Applications*: greater emphasis on university-scale research programs, increased support for fundamental plasma science, and improved interagency coordination for plasma science research.

We strongly endorse the new strategy and goals for the Fusion Energy Sciences Program and applaud actions taken by your Department during the past year: (1) awarding of Plasma Physics Junior Faculty Development Grants to five talented young faculty members, (2) initiating an interagency program for basic plasma science at universities, (3) encouraging the major fusion research experiments to utilize national teams of scientists, many of which are led by university faculty, and (4) establishing a peer reviewed program for the construction of innovative, small-scale plasma experiments.

During the AAAS Colloquium on Science and Technology Policy, you reminded the nation that "the need for government investment in science today is no less than it has ever been," and you asked for help "to establish the societal benefits" of these continued investments. Fusion energy sciences addresses intellectual challenges of fundamental importance and develops applications with clear societal benefits. Our universities are committing academic resources to the excellence of research and teaching in this area. We urge the Department of Energy to work with us in the important national endeavor of advancing fusion energy sciences.

Yours Sincerely,

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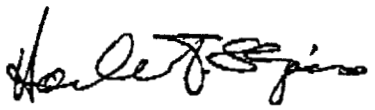

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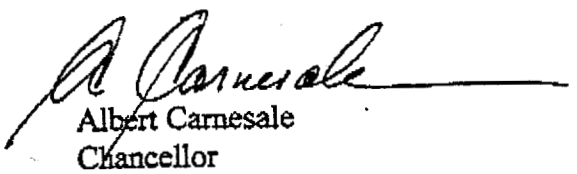

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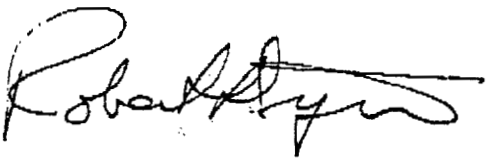

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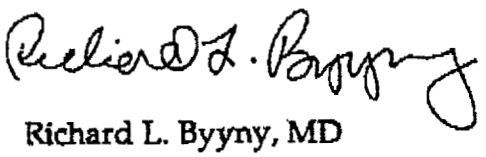

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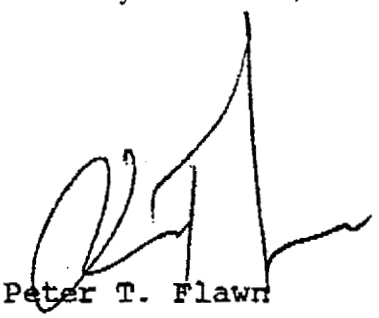

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