

**OPENING STATEMENT**  
**The Honorable Bob Inglis (R-SC)**  
**Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Energy and Environment**

*The Department of Energy's Support for the Savannah River Ecology Laboratory (SREL), Part II*

August 1, 2007

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

There are probably a few lawyers in this room, and at least some of them remember the “glory days” of retainer fees. Clients pay for a lawyer, even if the lawyer rarely provides services that help the client. The rationale, of course, was that there would come a few times when that lawyer will prove valuable, and when that happens, the client wants the lawyer around.

Coming from a lawyer, retainers were a great deal. From a client’s perspective though, it’s not hard to see why those “glory days” are pretty much over. There’s no reason to pay for a lawyer if you aren’t using the legal services. Why not just hire a lawyer when you need a lawyer?

Today, we’re going to hear from some who will say that the Department of Energy needs to keep the Savannah River Ecology Lab on “retainer.” And some of the evidence will point to the fact that SREL, over its 50 year career, has offered valuable services to SRS and the surrounding community in South Carolina and Georgia. Some people will say that DOE should not stop funding the lab, just because the lab’s services weren’t always matching up to DOE’s mission.

However, as we discuss the decision made by DOE to significantly reduce funding for SREL, some may find themselves agreeing with the client (DOE), who realized that, while they were paying for specific, needed services across other programs, they still had SREL “on retainer” at that point. The Department decided that a fee-for-service approach would be a better budgetary choice. After further investigation of the research at the lab, DOE found that SREL’s services were no longer needed - a decision that, if done in the private sector, would’ve not turned a single head.

In times of tight budgets and limited resources, we all take a closer look at our checkbook to see where our money is going. As we take ask questions about how DOE managed their checkbook, there may be value in seeing that, much as many of my legal clients eventually found out, there’s little budget sense in “retainers.”

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back the balance of my time.