

ENERGY COMMUNITIES ALLIANCE

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April 21, 2009

The Honorable Steven Chu
Secretary of Energy
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20585

RE: *Local Government Participation on the Proposed Department of Energy “Blue Ribbon” Panel on Nuclear Waste Management*

Dear Secretary Chu:

As you establish your Blue Ribbon Commission on Nuclear Waste Management, the Energy Communities Alliance (ECA) respectfully requests that you engage local governments and appoint an ECA local government official to the panel. Of the current options for consideration – interim storage, reprocessing, permanent geologic disposal - all will impact local governments and all will ultimately need support from local communities at both sender and receiver sites to be fully and successfully pursued. Two key factors contributing to the successful siting and operation of the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant were the local community’s early support for hosting the repository, and the Department of Energy’s (DOE) early engagement of affected communities, a process in which local governments around the country (including ECA) was heavily involved.

As you know from our meeting on February 11th, ECA is the organization of local communities adjacent to or impacted by DOE. Our members include all of the sites with defense high-level waste, most of the sites being considered for interim storage, and many of the sites interested in or being considered for reprocessing facilities. ECA members have long focused on nuclear waste management issues, including risk assessment, environmental impacts, and transportation, from both the technical and policy perspective. While we agree that the Blue Ribbon panel should be composed of “technical experts”, we believe important decisions cannot be made in a vacuum and must include input from all affected parties in order to best understand all of the risks and impacts.

Throughout DOE's history, DOE has tried to define risk in scientific and technical terms only to be asked whether the DOE took into account the perception of risk and the communication of risk so that the project can be supported by the public. However, as DOE has matured, it has learned that including more than scientists and technical experts in difficult and politically charged discussions and decision-making permits DOE to take into account all of the factors that will permit its project – similar to this project – to move forward. ECA recommends including a representative of local communities to ensure that the parties tackle all of the issues

The Honorable Steven Chu

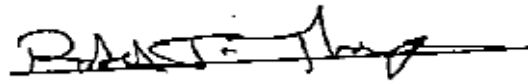
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of "risk" for through such a dialogue lies the greatest chance for reconciling differing perspectives on the question of risk and reaching agreement on the difficult issues being addressed by the panel.

ECA is very knowledgeable on these issues and has worked with communities, DOE, Congress and industry - most recently on discussions of reprocessing and interim storage. We hope to continue our work with you to find a sustainable path forward that is both environmentally sound and in the taxpayers' best interest. We believe the appointment of an ECA local government member on the proposed Blue Ribbon panel is a critical first step.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Thompson", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Robert Thompson, ECA Chair
Council Member, City of Richland, WA

cc: Senator Jeff Bingaman, Chairman, Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Senator Murkowski, Ranking Member, Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Rep. Waxman, Chairman, House Energy and Commerce
Rep. Barton, Ranking Member, House Energy and Commerce
Dr. Ines Triay, EM-1
Christopher Kouts, RW-1
Shane Johnson, NE-1