

# ENERGY COMMUNITIES ALLIANCE

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February 25, 2010

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

**Subject: Department of Energy Must Address High-Level Waste and Spent Fuel Issues with Local Communities in Light of Recent Decision to Abandon Yucca Mountain**

Dear Secretary Chu:

In December, Energy Communities Alliance (ECA), the organization of local communities adjacent to and impacted by DOE facilities, wrote to you and expressed concern about DOE's plans to abandon Yucca Mountain as a geological depository for high-level waste and spent fuel. In that letter ECA asked that DOE: 1) Engage local communities and governments on high-level waste and spent fuel decisions; and 2) Analyze the impact of DOE's decision to leave defense high-level waste and spent fuel in communities.

On February 2, 2010, DOE filed a request to suspend the Yucca Mountain license application and announced plans to withdraw it completely within a month. Some leaders have suggested that sites, including ECA member communities that currently host high-level waste and spent fuel, may become long-term storage sites. To date, ECA member communities and local governments have received little information from DOE on your plans to address the safe, long-term storage, and ultimate disposition of high-level waste and spent fuel in our communities. ECA communities and local governments are concerned about the risks and impacts of leaving the waste in place, and are frustrated by the lack of communication that has come from DOE on the issue. ECA believes that DOE should clarify its position on high-level waste and spent fuel and open a formal dialogue with our members to discuss questions including:

- What is DOE's plan to address high-level waste and spent fuel?
- How long will it take DOE to address high-level waste and spent fuel in communities?
- What is the environmental impact of the decision to abandon the NRC's license review for Yucca Mountain to determine if it is safe and the right place to dispose of high-level waste and spent fuel?

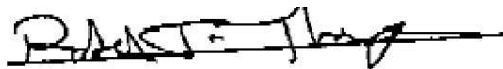
- What is the risk to communities of keeping waste at the sites indefinitely?
- Will DOE propose that an independent agency regulate DOE defense high-level waste and spent fuel to ensure protection of human health and the environment?

A central tenet of environmental health and safety is to communicate with the communities that are most impacted by the decision. In the past, DOE has engaged individual communities when decisions regarding health and safety arise in that community. In this instance, DOE's silence and unwillingness to address these issues only raises concerns.

In order to address the potential risk to communities, ECA believes **DOE should begin to analyze the safety and the impact on the environment in communities forced to store high-level waste and spent fuel as a result of the decision to terminate Yucca Mountain. DOE should provide local governments with funds to acquire third party technical assistance to analyze the impacts and monitor the storage of high-level waste and spent fuel in our communities.** As we stated in our December letter, ECA is very knowledgeable on these defense high-level waste and spent fuel issues and has worked with communities, DOE, Congress and industry - most recently on discussions of reprocessing and interim storage. ECA hopes to work with you to find a sustainable path forward that is both environmentally sound and in the taxpayers' best interest. We believe a formal meeting between local community representatives and DOE is a critical first step in finding a solution for the disposal of high-level waste and spent fuel.

If you have any questions, please contact me or Seth Kirshenberg, Executive Director, at Energy Communities Alliance at 202-828-2494.

Sincerely,



Robert Thompson, Chair  
Energy Communities Alliance,  
Council Member, Richland, WA

cc: Energy Communities Alliance Board of Directors  
Deputy Secretary Daniel Poneman, DOE  
Administrator Thomas D'Agostino, National Nuclear Security Administration  
Assistant Secretary Inés Triay, DOE-EM  
Dr. David Miller, Office of Nuclear Energy, DOE  
Senator Byron Dorgan, Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development  
Senator Robert Bennett, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development  
Senator Jeff Bingaman, Chair, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Senator Lisa Murkowski, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Senator Carl Levin, Chair, Senate Armed Services Committee

Senator John McCain, Ranking Member, Senate Armed Services Committee

Senator Patty Murray

Senator Maria Cantwell

Senator Mike Crapo

Senator James Risch

Senator Lindsey Graham

Senator Jim DeMint

Senator Harry Reid

Senator John Ensign

Representative Peter Visclosky, Chair, House Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development

Representative Rodney P. Frelinghuysen, Ranking Member, House Committee on  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development

Representative Henry Waxman, Chair, House Committee on Energy and Commerce

Representative Joe Barton, Ranking Member, House Committee on Energy and  
Commerce

Representative Ike Skelton, Chair, House Armed Services Committee

Representative Howard McKeon, Ranking Member, House Armed Services Committee

Representative Doc Hastings

Representative Norm Dicks

Representative Mike Simpson

Representative James Clyburn

Representative Adam Smith

Representative Shelly Berkley

Representative Dean Heller

Representative Dina Titus

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