

Executive Committee Officers:

David Wright, Chairman
Commissioner, SC Public Service Commission

Renze Hoeksema, Vice Chairman
Director of Federal Affairs, DTE Energy

David Boyd, Membership
Chairman, MN Public Utilities Commission

Robert Capstick, Finance
Director of Government Affairs, Yankee Atomic/Connecticut Yankee

Katrina McMurrian, Communications
Commissioner, FL Public Service Commission



For Immediate Release
February 20, 2009

Contact: Commissioner David Wright, Chairman, (850) 896-5180
Martez Norris, Executive Director, (910) 295-6658

NUCLEAR WASTE DISPOSAL PROGRAM LONG TERM SOLUTIONS

Given the energy challenges facing our nation, it is important that the Obama Administration implement policies that provide long-term solutions that move America closer to energy independence. As stated in a White Paper that Energy Secretary Steven Chu co-signed, "... nuclear power must play a significant and growing role in our nation's -- and the world's -- energy portfolio." And, "... that even with recycling, a geologic repository will be required." Therefore, the Nuclear Waste Strategy Coalition (NWSC) urges Secretary Chu to guide the Department of Energy's (DOE) actions in a manner that is consistent with the need for a permanent repository for nuclear waste, regardless of the nuclear waste management policies ultimately implemented.

In the NWSC's view, the development of new nuclear power plants cannot be separated from the continued progress of the nuclear waste disposal program. In that regard, the submittal of the Yucca Mountain repository license application in June 2008 by the DOE to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) was a major milestone in the history of site investigations, scientific analysis, and repository facilities design for the permanent disposal of spent nuclear fuel (SNF) and high-level radioactive waste (HLRW).

The geologic repository at Yucca Mountain is probably the most scientifically studied piece of real estate in the history of mankind. The license application contains results of more than 20 years of safety evaluations based on studies of the geologic, hydrologic, and geochemical environment and evaluations of how conditions might evolve over time.

The State of Nevada alleges that the science in the license application is flawed. If the Yucca Mountain scientific work is flawed, then allowing a full and thorough review of the license application by the NRC as required by the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982, as amended (NWPA), would be the best way to proceed. We will find out once and for all if questions about the technical suitability and safety of the Yucca Mountain permanent repository have been adequately addressed over the 20 years of scientific study.

Failing to allow the license application to proceed could cast the whole process into political chaos and uncertainty since Congress directed DOE to submit the licensing application through the NWPA. In addition, a decision to stop or redirect the Yucca Mountain program means stranding indefinitely SNF and HLRW throughout this nation.

It has been reported that Congressional Leaders intend to reduce fiscal year (FY) 2009 funding from the Nuclear Waste Fund (NWF) by approximately \$100 million and funding for defense waste disposal may also be reduced. Adequate funds are available in the NWF to implement the federal policy for permanent disposal of SNF and HLRW. Since 1983, ratepayers from 41 states have paid more than \$30 billion, including interest, into the NWF, which Congress established for development of a permanent repository for SNF and HLRW. In addition:

a) The nation's ratepayers continue to pay annually approximately \$758 million into the NWF for the removal of SNF and HLRW from existing nuclear plants sites and this amount will increase with the construction of new nuclear power plants.

b) The nation's ratepayers will incur additional costs for the indefinite stranding of SNF and HLRW at existing and future commercial nuclear power plants.

c) The nation's taxpayers will be burdened with the ongoing and increasing liability, currently estimated to be \$11 billion, associated with the DOE's failure to fulfill its statutory and contractual obligations to remove SNF and HLRW from commercial and decommissioned plant sites.

The DOE and Obama Administration have a legal obligation to manage SNF and HLRW from decommissioned power plants and other facilities and to determine whether Yucca Mountain is a viable repository. DOE's and the NRC's activities should be fully funded to ensure the license application has a fair and honest review.

The NWSC is an ad hoc group of state utility regulators, state attorneys general, electric utilities and associate members representing 47 member/affiliate organizations in 31 states, committed to reforming and adequately funding the U.S. civilian high-level nuclear waste transportation, storage, and disposal program.