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Commissioner, MN Public Utilities Commission

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Greg White, Communications
Commissioner, MI Public Service Commission



May 3, 2011

Letter sent via email

The Honorable Lee Hamilton, Co-Chair
Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future
Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20585

The Honorable Brent Scowcroft, Co-Chair
Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future
Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20585

Re: Comments Submitted to the Blue Ribbon Commission on the "What We've Heard" Report.

Dear Sirs:

We appreciate the Blue Ribbon Commission's (BRC) foresight to issue a report of what they have heard throughout the hearings process. The NWSC hopes that the BRC incorporates in its final recommendations the establishment of a quasi-government corporation to insulate the nuclear waste disposal program (Program) from future political whims to include the reform of the Nuclear Waste Fund (NWF) as an offsetting collection; thus, ensuring a continued stream of funding for the Program and that ratepayer's fees paid into the NWF are used for their intended purpose -- the removal of spent nuclear fuel (SNF) and high-level radioactive waste (HLRW) from commercial, and decommissioned sites; as well as all alternatives for interim storage, processing, and disposal of civilian and defense SNF and HLRW currently stranded at 121 sites in 39 states.

We are aware that Secretary of Energy Chu provided initial direction that Yucca Mountain is "off the table" -- despite the fact that your charter contains no such restriction. There is clearly no justification for Secretary Chu's admonition other than politics and the desire on the part of the current Administration to avoid further embarrassment over its actions. The intent to cancel the Yucca Mountain Project and the manner in which it was carried out have done considerable harm to our country and will continue to adversely affect us.

We find it ironic, that while Secretary Chu was a Director at Livermore Berkeley National Laboratory, he signed an August 2008 report which stated ... *"confidence can be achieved by continuing the licensing of a geologic repository at Yucca Mountain and enabling the continued interim storage of used nuclear fuel in dry casks and fuel pools."*

Therefore, the attempt to terminate the Yucca Mountain Project is over "political policy" rather than "scientific findings and the rule of law."

The merit of the Yucca Mountain site is an issue for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and it is not an issue the BRC should address; however, the way the Yucca Mountain Project was systematically dismantled by the Administration, and the way Congress failed to address its' own legislation, the implications on future project(s) involving SNF and HLRW is a fundamental issue that must be considered, and dealt with, by the BRC. Doing anything less would be an abrogation of your responsibility to the American people, who have paid \$5 million from the NWF for the BRC to ensure its' review is "comprehensive, open and inclusive."

NWSC Letter to the BRC

Page Two – May 3, 2011

The report implies on page one that communities and stakeholders, particularly those in Nevada, oppose the Yucca Mountain project. To the contrary, this project is supported by Nye County and other local communities surrounding the Yucca Mountain Project in Nevada.

Given the energy challenges facing our nation and the important role nuclear energy plays in our nation's energy generation, a permanent repository will still be needed regardless of future fuel cycling technologies that the BRC might recommend in the interim.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our comments on the future of the nuclear waste disposal program.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Wright", written in a cursive style.

David Wright
Commissioner, South Carolina Public Service Commission, and
Chairman, Nuclear Waste Strategy Coalition

The Nuclear Waste Strategy Coalition (NWSC) is a diverse and an ad hoc group of state utility regulators, state attorneys general, electric utilities and associate members representing 45 member organizations in 32 states. The primary focus by the NWSC is to ensure that DOE and Congress carry out the principles outlined in the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, as amended – protect ratepayer payments made into the Nuclear Waste Fund NWF; ensure that the nuclear waste disposal program is appropriately funded on an annual basis; and the removal of spent nuclear fuel SNF and high-level radioactive waste HLRW currently stranded at commercial and decommissioned nuclear plant sites.