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COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

SUBCOMMITTEES:

ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT
RANKING REPUBLICAN MEMBER
COMMUNICATIONS, TECHNOLOGY,
AND THE INTERNET



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

March 24, 2010

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

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am writing to express my concern with your stated plans to bring the Yucca Mountain project to an "orderly" close this year. On February 17, 2010, you notified the House Appropriations Committee that you intend to reprogram \$115 million in FY 2010 funds previously dedicated to the Yucca Mountain licensing process, to expedite the project's termination.

Specifically, I fear that the accelerated pace at which this program is being terminated could cause much of the vast Yucca Mountain scientific and technical record to be lost. We cannot allow this to happen, and I seek your assurance that the proper steps are being taken to preserve these documents and records for posterity. This information, which was established through a \$10 billion, 28-year effort, is the product of one of the most extensive research and development programs in our nation's history. It is extremely important that this information be preserved and maintained to inform future decision-making on the management of spent nuclear fuel and other high-level radioactive waste.

It is therefore troubling that the Department has not yet offered a plan to preserve and maintain the millions of documents, massive amount of data, numerous geologic samples and other scientific evidence compiled by the project. Such an important undertaking would require a significant amount of infrastructure to support the computers and facilities, yet there has not been any indication that these necessary steps have been taken. In fact, the Department has published no plans, and requested no funds, to make all relevant Yucca Mountain documentation publicly accessible, as required by the NRC. Moreover, I understand that the Department is planning to separate project staff and vacate project offices, opening up the possibility that no one will be left to preserve the scientific record.

Addressing Yucca Mountain in a responsible and orderly manner is of the utmost importance, given its significance to our country's clean energy future. Therefore, I would appreciate if members of your team could brief my staff on the Department's plans to close Yucca Mountain at their earliest convenience, but no later than Thursday, April 15th. Should you or your staff have any questions or concerns, please contact Michael Beckerman of my office at (202) 225-3761.

Sincerely,

Fred Upton
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and Environment

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