

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 30, 2018

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Democratic Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Energy and Water Development
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leader Schumer, Vice Chairman Leahy, and Ranking Member Feinstein:

As the Senate works with the House to craft an FY19 Appropriations Omnibus, we respectfully ask you to oppose any efforts and funding requests to restart the licensing process for the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository project in our home state of Nevada. Considering the FY19 Energy & Water Appropriations bill has already been signed into law, we see no reason to include funding for Yucca Mountain in an omnibus package.

The State of Nevada, the Nevada Congressional Delegation, and the majority of Nevadans are adamantly opposed to the storage and disposal of spent nuclear fuel and nuclear waste in our state. The development of Yucca Mountain is also opposed by organized labor in Southern Nevada's prominent travel and entertainment industries, SEIU-Nevada and UNITE HERE, as well as several conservation groups, including the League of Conservation Voters, NRDC, Sierra Club, and others.

In 1987, Congress amended the Nuclear Waste Policy Act and targeted Yucca Mountain, Nevada, as the sole site for our nation's geological repository. The State of Nevada and local communities have repeatedly and consistently opposed this site recommendation. Nevadans have never given their consent to such a facility. To otherwise force Nevada to store nuclear waste would infringe upon Nevada's right to protect and ensure the safety of its residents as it chooses. Furthermore, the State of Nevada stands ready to fully adjudicate the nearly 300 legal contentions should this process move forward – further halting any progress on resolving the nation's nuclear waste disposal dilemma for years to come.

We strongly oppose the construction of a repository at Yucca Mountain because it threatens the health and safety of Nevadans, putting at risk those residents that live near the site and in the 44 states that the transportation routes would travel by train or highway. The massive amount of infrastructure required for the safe operation of this facility is non-existent. The costly 300 miles of new railroad

track and 42 miles of tunnels to accommodate nuclear material and its infrastructure only infringes upon and further endangers the livelihoods of Nevada's residents and businesses.

Importantly, the Yucca Mountain project is also a threat to our national security and the readiness of our Air Force, because there is no transportation route to Yucca Mountain that would not impact testing and training at the Nevada Test and Training Range. Yucca Mountain sits directly adjacent to the Range, which provides the largest air and ground military training space in the contiguous United States, and is home to 75 percent of stateside Air Force live fire exercises and munitions training.

Furthermore, numerous scientific studies show that Yucca Mountain's geology and location make it unsafe for nuclear waste disposal. The Yucca Mountain site is seismically and volcanically active and contains faults and fractures that over time could move groundwater and any radioactive waste through to the aquifer beneath the site.

In its 2013 final report, the Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future recommended that any plan to address nuclear waste storage must be based on scientific analysis as well as consent from affected parties. Yucca Mountain does not have that kind of consensus. The majority of Nevadans agree that storing nuclear waste in Yucca Mountain is not a viable or sustainable solution. Consent must be at the center of any conversation related to depositing nuclear waste.

If Yucca has taught us anything, it is that forcing a repository on an unwilling state only gets the nation further away from a workable and safe solution. As such, we respectfully request that you reject any effort to restart the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository project, now and in the future.

Thank you for your consideration of this very important matter.

Sincerely,



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen
United States Senator-Elect