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NEWS from NIRS

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ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS, 5,000+ PEOPLE TELL SECRETARY CHU:

REJECT THE BRC REPORT--DO NOT USE CLOSED REACTORS AS EXCUSE TO CREATE TEMPORARY STORAGE SITE AND INITIATE MASS TRANSPORTATION OF RADIOACTIVE WASTE ACROSS THE U.S.

January 25, 2012, Washington, DC-- Today 88 national, regional and local environmental organizations, and more than 5,400 individuals, sent a letter to Energy Secretary Steven Chu urging him to reject the upcoming recommendation from the Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future (BRC) that would encourage establishment of an "interim" radioactive waste storage dump and begin the transportation of high-level radioactive waste across the U.S.

The letter was initiated by organizations representing communities around permanently closed reactor sites. The Commission's draft report cites these closed reactors, which are still storing their waste on their sites, as the reason that an "interim" storage site should be established immediately.

As the letter states, such a program runs exactly counter to the interests of these communities, "The Commission you appointed is claiming that it is acting in the interest of communities such as ours where closed nuclear power reactors are located, when in fact the Commission's recommendations are in opposition to our number one priority: isolation of radioactivity from our environment for as long as it is a hazard. Centralizing waste storage for purposes of expanded waste production or for reprocessing is contrary to this goal, and is not responsible policy."

"Since Secretary Chu appointed the Blue Ribbon Commission in 2010, concerned citizens living in communities impacted by radioactive waste from across the United States have participated in the BRC meetings, sent comments, and supported experts to participate," said Mary Olson of the Radioactive Waste Project of Nuclear Information and Resource Service. "Our voices have been

heard, but disregarded. This comes as no surprise since a majority of the Commissioners are individuals who have made, or supported the making of, the radioactive waste in question over the course of their careers. Of course they want to move it--they want to make more."

The Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future does include several members who are not directly tied to the nuclear industry, but a controlling share of the seats are held by individuals who, at one time or another, have had primary decision-making authority, or who have personally profited from commercial nuclear technology.

The Commission's final recommendations are due out by the end of this month. In broad brush, and likely to be little changed from the draft report released in June of 2011, these include centralization of irradiated fuel (the most concentrated and immediately lethal material in the nuclear inventory) to one or more central storage locations (that it asserts would be "temporary") entailing the shipment of this deadly waste by barge, truck and train on primary commerce routes.

Congressional efforts in the 1990s to force establishment of an "interim" radioactive waste storage site and begin a national waste transportation program led to widespread public concern about a "Mobile Chernobyl." President Clinton ultimately vetoed such legislation.

The groups urged Secretary Chu to "apply the logic that is missing" from the BRC report and prevent the transportation of radioactive waste "until a permanent isolation program is available." The groups also urged the implementation of Hardened On-Site storage of the waste at the reactor sites, as described in a document called *Principles for Safeguarding Nuclear Waste at Reactor Sites*, which has been endorsed by more than 170 organizations. That document is available at: <http://www.nirs.org/radwaste/policy/hossprinciples3232010.pdf>

The January 25, 2012 letter to Secretary Chu is available here: <http://www.nirs.org/radwaste/policy/chuwasteletter01242012.pdf>

January 25, 2012

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

Dear Secretary:

Soon your Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future (Commission) will send you its recommendations. We, who represent communities around closed nuclear reactor sites, urge you to reject the Commission's finding that centralizing irradiated fuel at so-called "temporary" storage sites is an urgent national priority, and to roundly reject reprocessing of this waste. The Commission you appointed is claiming that it is acting in the interest of communities such as ours where closed nuclear power reactors are located, when in fact the Commission's recommendations are in opposition to our number one priority: isolation of radioactivity from our environment for as long as it is a hazard. Centralizing waste storage for purposes of expanded waste production or for reprocessing is contrary to this goal, and is not responsible policy.

Simply relocating the exact same waste storage technology as is currently in use at nuclear reactor sites to a new "interim" storage site is not logical. The underlying reasons that claim to make such an exercise attractive contradict the goal of isolating waste:

- First: the continuing production of more and more highly radioactive waste at existing and new nuclear reactors makes permanent isolation that much more of a challenge. The attitude of previous policymakers was that more waste simply required a bigger hole; but this neglects all the steps in the making of nuclear fuel and the management of the highly radioactive waste that results, many of which will lead to "incidental waste," leaks, accidents and cumulative impacts which multiply with the mass of waste handled.
- Second: reprocessing (plutonium separation) is the antithesis of isolation of radioactivity since the solid ceramic fuel rod is rendered into a series of additional wastes, sludge, caustic liquid, leaks, liquid discharges and gaseous emissions.
- Third: unnecessary transportation to and from the interim storage site(s) causes unnecessary risks (assuming that the "interim" site is actually temporary).

Secretary Chu, we ask you to apply the logic that is missing. Our community has made some unprecedented recommendations, in addition to our ongoing call to stop making more waste:

- Don't move the waste from the reactor sites for now--until a permanent isolation program is available. If an existing site is not qualified for interim waste storage, it is also not qualified for reactor operation.
- Harden waste storage at the reactors--heed, adopt and implement the Principles for Safeguarding Nuclear Waste at Reactor Sites as has been repeatedly presented to the Blue Ribbon Commission.

- Many organizations support the idea of using the Waste Fund or the Court-awarded-damages for the hardening of the waste at reactor sites, with a concomitant adjustment in waste fund fees collected.
- Unlike the Commission, we believe, along with the Department of Energy's former Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management and independent analysts such as those retained by the State of Nevada, that the thousands of shipments required to transport the nation's irradiated fuel will result in accidents--some of them very harmful and expensive. We are also concerned about greater security risks during shipment. For these reasons unnecessary or arbitrary movement of this waste must be avoided.
- Our sites are not suitable for waste "disposal" and so we will remain engaged until there is a path forward for permanent isolation of this waste for as long as it is a hazard.

Since there is no representation of any impacted community on the Commission, and comments that have been given in good faith by our community have been ignored by the Commission, we turn to you.

We are organizations that are actively engaged with radioactive waste policy and have been for a long time. Our members include those living near nuclear power reactors and also former reactor sites that we helped to close; we celebrate that no more radioactive waste is being generated at these closed sites and yet we remain engaged and willing to support a **responsible** waste policy going forward. Centralizing waste storage for purposes of expanded waste production or for reprocessing is not responsible. Plutonium that results from reprocessing is nothing but trouble; all the data support this.

Please do not let the situation at closed reactor sites be misused by the politics of the commercial nuclear industry to justify irresponsible policies that would be bad for all.

Sincerely,

Convening group--Signers representing organizations around closed reactor and reprocessing sites:

Christa Maria
Big Rock Point Intervenor
Charlevoix, MI

Victor McManemy
Citizens for Alternatives to Chemical Contamination
Lake, MI

Michael Welch
Redwood Alliance
Arcata, CA

Deb Katz
Citizen Awareness Network
Shelburne Falls, MA

Alice Hirt
Don't Waste Michigan
Holland MI

Michael J. Keegan
Coalition for a Nuclear Free Great Lakes
Monroe, MI

David Kraft
Nuclear Energy Information Service
Chicago, IL

William Linnell
Cheaper, Safer Power
Portland, ME

Charles K. Johnson
Center for Energy Research
Portland, OR

Nina Bell, J.D., Executive Director
Northwest Environmental Advocates
Portland, OR

Lois Gibbs
Center for Health and Environmental Justice
Falls Church, VA

Barbara Warren
Citizens Environmental Coalition
Albany, NY

Michael Mariotte
Nuclear Information and Resource Service
Takoma Park, MD

Kevin Kamps
Beyond Nuclear
Takoma Park, MD

Dave Hamilton
Sierra Club
Washington, DC

Catherine Thomasson, M.D.
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Washington, DC

Glenn Carroll
Nuclear Watch South
Atlanta, GA

The following groups engaged with nuclear policy sign in support:

Gretel Johnston
Mothers Against TN River Radiation
Scottsboro, AL

Patricia T. Birnie
GE Stockholders Alliance
Tucson, AZ

Russell Lowes
www.SafeEnergyAnalyst.org
Tucson, AZ

Dennis Larson
People's Action for a Safe Environment
Parthenon, AR

Bradley Angel
Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice
San Francisco, CA

Elaine Holder
San Luis Obispo Mothers for Peace
San Luis Obispo, CA

Mary Beth Brangan, James Heddle
Ecological Options Network, EON
Bollinas, CA

Linda Seeley
Terra Foundation
San Luis Obispo, CA

Lillian Light
Environmental Priorities Network
Manhattan Beach, CA

Robin Bayer
Magic
Palo Alto, CA

Rinaldo Brutoco
World Business Academy
Santa Barbara, CA

David Hartsough
PEACEWORKERS
San Francisco, CA

Molly Johnson
Grandmothers for Peace/San Luis Obispo County Chapter
San Miguel, CA

Marylia Kelley
Tri-Valley CAREs (Communities Against a Radioactive Environment)
Livermore, CA

Alan Muller, Executive Director
Green Delaware
Port Penn, DE

Cara L. Campbell
Ecology Party of Florida
Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Nancy O'Byrne
Pax Christi Florida
St. Augustine, FL

Carolyn Treadway
No New Nukes
Normal, IL

Ellen Rendulich
Citizens Against Ruining the Environment
Lockport, IL

Laureen Dunne
C.A.R.E. Citizens Active in Reclaiming the Environment
La Grange, IL

Maureen Headington
Stand Up/Save Lives Campaign
Burr Ridge, IL

Franklin Dmitryev
Co-National Organizer of News and Letters Committees
Chicago, IL

Joyce Harant
Peoria Families Against Toxic Waste
Peoria, IL

Tracy Meints Fox
Global Warming Solutions
Peoria, IL

The Iowa Beyond Nuclear Coalition
Des Moines, IA

Jane E. Magers
EarthCare, Inc.
Des Moines, IA

Ken Bossong
SUN DAY Campaign
Takoma Park, MD

Dagmar Fabian
Crabshell Alliance
Cockeysville MD

Sandra Gavutis
C-10 Research & Education Foundation
Newburyport, MA

Marilyn Strong, RN
Solar Design Associates
Harvard, MA

David Agnew
Cape Downwinders
Harwich, MA

Hattie Nestel
Nuclear Free Future Coalition of Western Massachusetts
Athol, MA

Keith Gunter
Citizens Resistance at Fermi Two
Monroe, MI

Lea Foushee
North American Water Office
Lake Elmo, MN

Jesse P. Van Gerven
Missourians for Safe Energy
Columbia, MO

Chris Daum
Oasis Montana Inc.,
Stevensville, MT

Judy Treichel
Nevada Nuclear Waste Task Force
Las Vegas, NV

Doug Bogen
Seacoast Anti-Pollution League
Exeter, NH

Paula Gotsch
GRAMMEES
Normandy Beach, NJ

Joni Arends
Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety
Santa Fe, NM

Marian Naranjo
Honor Our Pueblo Existence (H.O.P.E.)
Espanola, NM

Tim Judson
Central New York-Citizens Awareness Network
Syracuse, NY

Gail Payne
RadiationTruth.org
Centerport, NY

Jessica Azulay
Alliance for a Green Economy
Syracuse, NY

Paul Connett, PhD
Fluoride Action Network
Canton, NY

Wells Eddleman
NC Citizens Research Group
Durham, NC

Mali Lightfoot
Helen Caldicott Foundation/NuclearFreePlanet.org
Asheville, NC

Robert F. Howarth, Board Member
Western North Carolina Physicians for Social Responsibility
Asheville, NC

Patricia Marida
Ohio Sierra Club Nuclear Issues Committee
Columbus, Ohio

Connie Kline
Ohio CARE - Citizens Against a Radioactive Environment
Cleveland, OH

Marilyn McCulloch
The Carrie Dickerson Foundation
Tulsa, OK

Maye Thompson, RN, PhD
Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility
Portland, OR

Paige Knight
Hanford Watch
Portland, OR

Maureen Mulligan
Sustainable Futures Communications, LLC
Shermans Dale, PA

Erica Frank, MD, MPH
President, Next Generation University
Newtown, PA

Beth Pirolli
Families United for a Safe Environment
Tullytown, PA

Molly Rush on behalf of
Board of Directors
The Thomas Merton Center
Pittsburgh, PA

Finian Taylor
Hilton Head for Peace
Hilton Head, SC

Sandra Kurtz
Bellefonte Efficiency & Sustainability Team
Chattanooga, TN

Karen Hadden
Executive Director - SEED Coalition
Austin, TX

Tom "Smitty" Smith
Director, Public Citizen's Texas Office
Austin, TX

Cynthia Weehler
Energia Mia
San Antonio, TX.

Matt Pacenza
HEAL Utah
Salt Lake City, UT

Steve Erickson
Citizens Education Project
Salt Lake City, UT

Leslie Sachs
Safe and Green Campaign
Brattleboro, VT

Debra Stoleroff
Vermont Yankee Decommissioning Alliance
Montpelier, VT

Jennifer Olaranna Viereck, Ex. Director
HOME: Healing Ourselves & Mother Earth
N. Bennington, VT

Marianne Edain
Whidbey Environmental Action Network
Langley, WA

Chris Herman
Winter Sun Design
Edmonds, WA

Al Gedicks
Wisconsin Resources Protection Council
Tomahawk, WI

Marcia Halligan
Kickapoo Peace Circle
Viroqua, WI

International

Mary Madigan
Friends of Westernport
Victoria Australia

Matthias Reichl
Center for Encounter and Active Non-Violence
Bad Ischl, Austria

Karen Weingeist
Coalition for a Clean Green Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, Canada