This discussion draft bill merely parrots, in large part, the Blue Ribbon Commission on America’s Nuclear Future final report from Jan. 2012, in putting top priority on establishing so-called “centralized interim storage” away from reactors for highly radioactive wastes. The BRC ignored countless comments opposed to such a plan.

If enacted, this would launch unprecedented numbers of risky high-level radioactive waste (HLRW) shipments, by truck, train, and barge, onto our country’s roads, rails, and waterways. These risks could well turn out to be in vain, if the ultimate final disposal site ends up being located far away, or back in the direction from which they came in the first place. This amounts to launching a risky radioactive waste shell game, all for naught. Each truck, train, and barge shipment is another round in the revolver of a risky game of radioactive Russian roulette, in terms of the shipping risks.

Take the nuclear power industry’s recently cancelled Private Fuel Storage, LLC (PFS) parking lot dump targeted at the tiny Skull Valley Goshutes Indian Reservation in Utah. The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission rubberstamped a construction and operations license for the facility in 2006, over the objections of tribal traditions, the State of Utah, and nearly 500 environmental and environmental justice organizations across the country. PFS was, after all, environmental injustice, radioactive racism, at its worst.

The plan at PFS was to store the irradiated nuclear fuel for 20 to 40 years, then transfer it to a permanent dumpsite at Yucca Mountain, Nevada. However, the Obama administration has wisely cancelled the Yucca dump proposal. 'Plan B' at PFS would then have been “return to sender.” Wastes from the Maine Yankee atomic reactor, as but one example, would have traveled 2,000 miles out to Utah, and then returned 2,000 miles right back to where they came from in the first place. Maine Yankee’s 540 tons of highly radioactive irradiated nuclear fuel, in dozens of transport containers, would have traveled 4,000 miles round trip, accomplishing absolutely nothing.

The risks of accidents, attacks, and “mobile x-ray machines that can’t be turned off” shipments means HLRW transportation cannot be rushed into for no good reason, such as nuclear industry lobbyists’ pressure to transfer title and liability for the wastes from the utilities that profited from its generation onto the American taxpayer.

Delivering wastes to de facto permanent parking lot dumps would take decades. This means on-site pool and dry cask storage risks at the reactor sites would persist that whole time. For this reason, hundreds of environmental groups have long called for hardened on-site storage at reactor sites, to defend against attacks, safeguard against accidents, and prevent leaks into the environment during that inevitable waiting period.