Honorable secretary, assistant secretary, and DOE decision makers:

I would like to urge you AGAINST approval of a proposal to deregulate high-level radioactive wastes. These wastes should not be abandoned in situ, at such places as Hanford Nuclear (Weapons) Reservation on the Columbia River in Washington State, the West Valley reprocessing facility upstream of the Great Lakes in New York, and other areas.

Leaving high-level radioactive wastes where they are will allow them to leak into the environment, to flow downstream to contaminate fish that we eat and water that we drink, to blow into the air we breathe, and to contaminate soil, water, and air for future generations.

Why would we put at risk the health of people decades from now so that we can save money now? Why would we risk contamination of the Columbia River, Lakes Erie and Ontario and the St. Lawrence River - sources of food and water for millions of people in the United States, Canada, and in Native American tribal areas. We have made mistakes in the past by allowing radioactive material to be abandoned in the ground at the Savannah River Site in South Carolina and at a site in Idaho. I have relatives and friends who are concerned about the future wellbeing of people who live along the South Carolina coast because of the threat of this contamination. Our children and grandchildren are looking to you leaders for protection of their future health.

Three decades ago I wrote about the history of uranium processing and the legacy of radioactive wastes in the St. Louis region. Many of the region’s contaminated sites have been cleaned up, but some of the wastes remain. Some of the materials including thorium, radium, and uranium will remain radioactive for hundreds of thousands of years. Swallowing, inhaling or other exposure to radioactive materials can cause birth defects, cancer, and other diseases.

These radioactive materials have no business abandoned in areas near rivers and lakes, which provide drinking water to so many people.

The federal government creates nuclear weapons. The federal government has the moral and fiscal responsibility to clean up the radioactive wastes and NOT to reclassify the wastes and NOT to leave them where they can pose future risks.