Re: Opposing any Amendments Furthering a Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Storage Proposal

Dear Chairwoman Lowey and Ranking Member Granger:

On behalf of the National Congress of American Indians, the oldest and largest national organization advocating on behalf of Indian tribal governments, American Indians and Alaska Natives, I write to oppose any amendments to appropriations language that would further the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste storage proposal.

NCAI is concerned that an amendment may be offered to pending appropriations bills which would streamline the development of a controversial Yucca Mountain repository. This is a development project local tribes and other community members have consistently opposed.

It is critically important for Congress to understand the unique circumstances surrounding tribal lands and land loss. Most current reservation boundaries are but small fractions of the ancestral homelands of Indian tribes, meaning there are many cultural, sacred and historic sites outside of reservation boundaries that are important to tribes. In this matter, the proposed nuclear storage site, Yucca Mountain, has been identified as a site of historic and cultural significance to many tribal nations in the area and should never have been selected as a storage site to begin with.

That being said, tribes understand the liabilities and responsibilities assumed by the federal government to store the Nation’s nuclear waste. We ask that such storage not be at the expense of the public health and welfare of tribal nations.

In closing, NCAI reiterates its opposition to any amendment to appropriations language that would further the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste storage proposal. For far too long, Indian tribes have endured the negative impacts of the Nuclear Era. We implore Congress to protect tribal nations’ rights to lands, natural resources and cultural and historic sites. We thank you for your time and look forward to any further questions or dialogue about this matter.

Sincerely,

Jefferson Keel
NCAI President