



# State of New Mexico

Michelle Lujan Grisham  
*Governor*

June 7, 2019

The Honorable Rick Perry  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20585

The Honorable Kristine Svinicki  
Chairman  
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Mail Stop O-16B33  
Washington, DC 20555-0001

Dear Secretary Perry and Chairman Svinicki:

I write to express my opposition to the proposed interim storage of high-level radioactive waste in the state of New Mexico. The interim storage of high-level radioactive waste poses significant and unacceptable risks to New Mexicans, our environment and our economy. Furthermore, the absence of a permanent high-level radioactive waste repository creates even higher levels of risk and uncertainty around any proposed interim storage site.

As you know, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is evaluating the issuance of a 40-year license to Holtec International for a consolidated interim storage facility in southeastern New Mexico. As proposed, this facility would store spent nuclear fuel (SNF) and reactor-related materials greater than low-level radioactive waste.

A facility of this nature poses an unacceptable risk to New Mexicans, who look to southeastern New Mexico as a driver of economic growth in our state. New Mexico's agricultural industry contributes approximately \$3 billion per year to the state's economy, \$300 million of which is generated in Lea and Eddy Counties, where the proposed facility is to be sited.

Further, the Permian Basin, situated in west Texas and southeastern New Mexico, is the largest inland oil and gas reservoir and the most prolific oil and gas producing region in the world. New Mexico's oil and natural gas industry contributed approximately \$2 billion to the state last year. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), Lea County and Eddy County were ranked the second and sixth oil-producing counties in the country, respectively, earlier this year, with production continuing to increase.

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Establishing an interim storage facility in this region would be economic malpractice. Any disruption of agricultural or oil and gas activities as a result of a perceived or actual incident would be catastrophic to New Mexico, and any steps toward siting such a project could cause a decrease in investment in two of our state's biggest industries. For those reasons, the New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association, the New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau and the Permian Basin Petroleum Association have all sent me letters opposing high-level waste storage in southeastern New Mexico. I have attached their letters for your review.

In addition to significant economic concerns about this project's potential impact on agriculture and the oil and gas industry, I am concerned about the financial burden it could place on the state and local communities. Transporting material of this nature safely requires both well-maintained infrastructure and highly specialized emergency response equipment and personnel that can respond to an incident at the facility or on transit routes. The state of New Mexico cannot be expected to support these activities.

Finally, given that there is currently no permanent repository for high-level waste in the United States, any interim storage facility will be an indefinite storage facility. Over this time, it is likely that the casks storing SNF and high-level wastes will lose integrity and will require repackaging. Any repackaging of SNF and high-level wastes increases the risk of accidents and radiological health risks. Again, New Mexicans should not have to tolerate this risk.

Given the potential for adverse impacts to public health, the environment and our economy, I cannot support the interim storage of SNF or high-level waste in New Mexico.

I thank you for your consideration of these concerns and look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Lujan Grisham". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michelle Lujan Grisham  
Governor