

**News from Beyond Nuclear**  
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**Contact: Kevin Kamps, Radioactive Waste Specialist, Beyond Nuclear,**  
**(240) 462-3216, [kevin@beyondnuclear.org](mailto:kevin@beyondnuclear.org)**

**26 Environmental Groups from across Canada and U.S. Urge  
Congressional Opposition to  
High-Risk Radioactive Waste Shipping on Great Lakes**

***H.R. 3053 Could Launch up to 453 Barge Shipments of  
Highly Radioactive Waste on Lake Michigan***

Washington, D.C.—A coalition comprised of eighteen American, and eight Canadian, environmental groups has delivered [a letter](#) to a bipartisan group of U.S. Representatives, urging opposition to the Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act of 2017 (H.R. 3053). [It has recently been reported that the bill could head to the U.S. House floor for a vote as early as this month.](#) H.R. 3053 would expedite the opening of highly controversial supposedly temporary storage facilities, and permanent dumpsites, for commercial irradiated nuclear fuel, in the American Southwest. This would, in turn, accelerate the shipment of high-risk, highly radioactive waste, by truck, train, and/or barge, near -- or even on -- the Great Lakes.

The coalition, representing seven U.S. states and two Canadian provinces, wrote the U.S. Reps.: “[I]rradiated nuclear fuel can get no closer to the Great Lakes, than sailing upon its very surface waters, on barges. Except, perhaps, by leakage into the Great Lakes themselves – as from a transport disaster. An accident or attack that releases the contents of an irradiated nuclear fuel shipment into the Great Lakes could potentially harm millions downstream, via hazardous radioactive contamination of their drinking water supply. H.R. 3053 facilitates the launch of such unprecedented shipments, and in large numbers (up to 453 rail-sized casks, via barge, on Lake Michigan!), and for this reason alone must be blocked.”

[As documented by the U.S. Department of Energy](#) (DOE), the up to 453 proposed barge shipments of highly radioactive irradiated nuclear fuel on Lake Michigan would originate at the still operating Palisades atomic reactor in Covert, Michigan, and twin reactor Point Beach nuclear power plant in Two Rivers, Wisconsin, as well as at the permanently shutdown Kewaunee atomic reactor in Carlton, Wisconsin. The rail-sized barge shipping containers, weighing 100+ tons each, would be transferred onto trains at the Ports of Muskegon, Michigan and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, respectively.

The environmental coalition letter was addressed to [32 Democratic and Republican U.S. Representatives, who co-signed a letter to the U.S. Secretary of State last June.](#)

That congressional letter urged the Trump administration to take prompt action to stop a highly controversial radioactive waste dump, proposed by Ontario Power Generation, targeted at Kincardine, Ontario, Canada, on the Lake Huron shoreline.

The environmental coalition was also critical of an amendment incorporated into H.R. 3053 last June, sponsored by Michigan U.S. Representatives Fred Upton (Republican, St. Joe) and Debbie Dingell (Democrat, Dearborn/Ypsilanti).

The amendment simply states, in its entirety:

*SEC. 604. SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING STORAGE OF NUCLEAR WASTE NEAR THE GREAT LAKES.*

*It is the Sense of Congress that the governments of the United States and Canada should not allow permanent or long-term storage of spent nuclear fuel or other radioactive waste near the Great Lakes.*

The environmental coalition pointed out the hypocrisy of Rep. Upton's authorship of the amendment in particular. The coalition argued Upton has actually supported, for his entire congressional career since the 1980s, "*long-term storage of spent nuclear fuel...near the Great Lakes,*" at three reactors in his own district. That is, Upton's strong support for reactor operations has had an inescapable byproduct, irradiated nuclear fuel, highly radioactive wastes that inevitably must be stored on-site for not years, but decades. In fact, the Palisades and Cook nuclear power plants' irradiated nuclear fuel has been stored on-site, on the Lake Michigan shore, for nearly a half-century.

Although Debbie Dingell has served in Congress only three years, she has supported reactor operations (and hence radioactive waste generation, and on-site storage) at the Fermi nuclear power plant, on the Lake Erie shore very near her district.

Debbie Dingell's predecessor in the congressional seat, her husband of 36 years, John Dingell (also a Democrat), represented southeast Michigan in Congress for six decades, the longest serving member of congress in history. And John Dingell supported Fermi nuclear power plant's operation (and hence radioactive waste generation, and on-site storage) from the very beginning, dating back to the 1960s.

Thus the environmental coalition concluded: "The bad in H.R. 3053 far outweighs what little good the Upton-Dingell amendment would achieve. Such a Resolution, stating '*It is the Sense of Congress that the governments of the United States and Canada should not allow permanent or long-term storage of spent nuclear fuel or other radioactive waste near the Great Lakes,*' should be either stand alone, or else incorporated as part of legislation that protects public health, safety, and the environment. H.R. 3053, with its authorization and acceleration of unprecedented, very large numbers of high-risk irradiated nuclear fuel road and rail shipments near

or upstream of the Great Lakes, and barge shipments on Lake Michigan, would do the opposite.” The groups urged the U.S. Reps. to vote against H.R. 3053.