Groups Re-Voice Opposition to Nuclear “Booster” Nominee for Nuclear Regulatory Commission

TAKOMA PARK, MD – On the heels of President Obama’s October 9 nomination of William Magwood IV to fill an opening at the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), anti-nuclear groups around the country renewed their opposition to a candidate markedly favorable toward the nuclear industry. Mr. Magwood was most recently Director of Nuclear Energy for the U.S. Department of Energy.

Beyond Nuclear joined close to 100 other watchdog groups opposed to nuclear energy in criticizing the selection of Mr. Magwood when it co-signed an August 3rd letter to President Obama pointing out Magwood’s background, experience, and apparent key interests are in the realm of nuclear power’s promotion, rather than in regulation to protect public health, safety and the environment – the official mandate of the NRC.

“We urged President Obama to instead nominate a strong regulator to the NRC Commission who has demonstrated a commitment to public safety, rather than to nuclear power industry promotional and financial interests,” said Kevin Kamps, radioactive waste watchdog for Beyond Nuclear who signed the letter on the organization’s behalf.

“Mr. Magwood has a long track record promoting the nuclear industry’s interest including the scientifically-flawed Yucca Mountain dumpsite proposal, canceled by President Obama,” Kamps said. While at the DOE, Mr. Magwood led tours at the dumpsite for overseas counterparts who, he told ClimateWire, “had an experience similar to what I have. You go to the top of the mountain, and you realize that you're really in the middle of nowhere. They all wished they had some kind of desolate area like this.”

Nevadans living along transportation routes and close to Yucca Mountain did not share this view of their state as a wasteland, suitable for radioactive waste dumping.

"We are also concerned about Mr. Magwood’s support for the Bush administration’s Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) and its proposed revival of commercial
radioactive waste reprocessing,” Kamps added. Although President Obama terminated
the GNEP programmatic environmental impact statement last summer, the possibility
still looms that reprocessing could still be promoted – a threat made more likely by the
appointment of Mr. Magwood.

The groups are now calling on members of the U.S. Senate Environment and Public
Works Committee “to carefully vet Mr. Magwood's nomination, to guard against conflict
of interest and bias in favor of nuclear power's expansion at the highest level of the
federal government's nuclear power safety regulatory enforcement agency, the NRC.”

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