August 3, 2009

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500
Submitted via FAX to (202) 456-2461

Dear President Obama,

We write to you with deep concern regarding recent media reports that you are considering nominating William Magwood to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). Mr. Magwood’s background, experience, and apparent key interests are in the realm of nuclear power’s promotion, not its regulation to protect public health, safety and the environment. We urge you 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.

In the 1970s, the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) was abolished due to the inherently contradictory nature of its mandate, to both promote atomic energy and regulate its safety. The AEC was replaced by a promotional agency (first the Energy Research and Development Administration and ultimately the Department of Energy, DOE), as well as by a separate safety regulatory agency, the NRC.

NRC’s supposed mandate, reflected in its oft repeated slogan “Protecting People and the Environment,” is to protect public health, safety and the environment from the radiological risks of commercial atomic reactors and related uranium fuel chain activities. As concerned citizen groups and community organizers watch-dogging nuclear power facilities know all too well, NRC often fails to live up to its mission statement. In fact, there are numerous examples of agency foot dragging and “enforcement discretion” extended over decades for widespread noncompliance on critical reactor safety issues, including fire protection and emergency core cooling systems. All too often, NRC rubberstamps nuclear applications after inadequate safety and security reviews, thus serving more as a lax facilitator for, rather than a watchdog on, the industry it is supposed to regulate.

NRC’s own inspector general concluded that such prioritization of industry financial interests over public safety by NRC led to a near disaster at the Davis-Besse nuclear reactor near Toledo in 2002, due to a massive corrosion hole in the reactor’s lid that nearly breached the pressure vessel and risked a loss of reactor coolant accident. Similarly, the rupture of a steam generator tube at the Indian Point nuclear power plant near New York City in 2000 risked a cascade of ruptured tubes and loss of reactor coolant accident. As reactors deteriorate with age, such breakdown phase accident risks increase requiring increased vigilance and enforcement. In addition, proposed new reactors would come with inherent increased break-in phase accident risks, due to bugs that have yet to be worked out. Due to such increased risks, the NRC needs strong safety regulators, not industry promoters.
Mr. Magwood served for seven years as the head of the Office of Nuclear Energy at DOE. In that position, he was one of the chief proponents for nuclear power. Mr. Magwood helped lead the Advanced Fuel Cycle Initiative, Nuclear Power 2010, and the Generation IV Nuclear Energy Systems Initiative. He also served as the first chairman of the Generation IV International Forum and as chair of the Steering Committee on Nuclear Energy Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation. The role of an NRC Commissioner is supposed to be quite different from such nuclear power proponent activities.

At DOE, and as recently as May 2009, Mr. Magwood has been promoting the Yucca Mountain dumpsite proposal. Referring to foreign counterparts he took to Yucca Mountain for tours during his DOE tenure, Mr. Magwood was quoted in the *ClimateWire* as saying "They 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 and wonder why we're having this argument." Of course, Nevadans living along transportation routes and close to Yucca Mountain do not consider their state a wasteland, suitable for radioactive waste dumping.

Both during your presidential campaign and after assuming office, you have clearly stated that Yucca Mountain is not an option for high-level radioactive waste disposal. We thank you for your wise decision. Thus, we are deeply concerned that as an NRC Commissioner, Mr. Magwood would support this Yucca dump proposal in contradiction to your stated policy.

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. We thank you for terminating the GNEP programmatic environmental impact statement last month. As recently as this year, Mr. Magwood has been promoting commercial radioactive waste reprocessing. We are concerned that he would continue to promote reprocessing, which would be highly inappropriate as an NRC Commissioner.

The current open seats on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission present you with a vital opportunity to steer NRC back to its mandated mission to protect public safety, security, health and the environment. We urge you in the strongest possible terms to nominate persons devoted to nuclear safety, rather than to the nuclear industry’s expansion.

Sincerely,

Kevin Kamps, Radioactive Waste Watchdog
Kay Drey, Board Member
Beyond Nuclear
Takoma Park, MD

Michael Mariotte
Executive Director
Nuclear Information and Resource Service
Takoma Park, MD
Pamela Moffat  
Episcopal Peace Fellowship  
Washington, DC

Tom Clements  
Friends of the Earth  
Washington, DC

Jim Riccio  
Greenpeace  
Washington, DC

Tyson Slocum  
Public Citizen Energy Program  
Washington, DC

Ken Bossong  
Executive Director  
SUN DAY Campaign  
Takoma Park, MD

Bruce K. Gagnon  
Coordinator  
Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space  
Brunswick, ME

Doug Kline  
International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW)  
Somerville, MA

Pat Birnie  
GE Stockholders' Alliance  
Tucson, AZ

Russell Lowes  
Research Director  
www.SafeEnergyAnalyst.org  
Tucson, Arizona

Shirley Vaine, President  
Rochelle Becker, Executive Director
Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility  
San Luis Obispo, CA

Daniel Hirsch  
Committee to Bridge the Gap  
Ben Lomond, CA

Bradley Angel  
Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice  
San Francisco, CA

Rinaldo Brutoco  
President  
World Business Academy  
Ojai, CA

Molly Johnson  
Area Coordinator  
Grandmothers for Peace/San Luis Obispo County Chapter  
San Miguel, CA

Steve Daniels, M.D.  
Physicians for Social Responsibility  
Santa Barbara, CA

Robert M. Gould, MD  
President  
SF-Bay Area Chapter  
Physicians for Social Responsibility  
San Francisco, CA

Linda Seeley and Jane Swanson  
Mothers for Peace  
San Luis Obispo, CA

Jane Williams  
Executive Director  
California Communities Against Toxics  
Rosamond, CA
Taale Laafi Rosellini  
Founder/Executive Director  
African Family Film Foundation  
Santa Cruz CA

Judith Mohling  
Coordinator  
Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center  
Nuclear Nexus Project  
Boulder, CO

Bob Lagow  
Mummy Range Institute  
Red Feather Lakes, Colorado

Sal Mangiaglì  
Citizens Awareness Network  
Haddam, CT

Nancy Burton  
Director  
Connecticut Coalition Against Millstone  
Redding Ridge, CT

Gregory Olinyk  
ASimplePeace.org  
New Canaan, CT

Donald Keesing  
Coordinator  
Voices Opposed to Environmental Racism (VOTER)  
Washington, DC

Glenn Carroll  
Coordinator  
Nuclear Watch South  
Atlanta, GA

Sara Barczak  
Program Director, High Risk  
Southern Alliance for Clean Energy  
Savannah, GA
Bill Chisholm  
Idaho Energy Education Project  
Buhl, Idaho

Andrea Shipley  
Executive Director  
Snake River Alliance  
Boise, ID

David Kraft  
Executive Director  
Nuclear Energy Information Service  
Evanston, IL

Carolyn Treadway  
No New Nukes  
Normal, IL

Carol Stark, Director  
and Ellen Meeks Rendulich, Director  
Citizens Against Ruining the Environment (C.A.R.E.)  
Lockport, IL

Maureen Headington  
President  
Stand Up/Save Lives Campaign  
Burr Ridge, Illinois

David Borris  
Board  
North Suburban Peace Initiative  
Chicago, IL

Marjorie Parker  
Peace Coalition of Southern Illinois/Fellowship of Reconciliation  
Carbondale, IL

Grant Smith  
Executive Director  
Citizens Action Coalition of Indiana  
Indianapolis, IN
John Blair  
President  
Valley Watch, Inc.  
Evansville, IN

Mary Davis  
Ecoperspectives  
Lexington, KY

Jeff Napolitano  
Program Coordinator  
American Friends Service Committee  
Western MA

Deb Katz and Hattie Nestel  
Citizens Awareness Network  
Shelburne Falls, MA

Sandra Gavutis, Executive Director  
C-10 Research & Education Foundation, Inc.  
Newburyport, MA

Mary Lampert  
Pilgrim Watch  
Duxbury, MA

Johanna Neumann  
Maryland PIRG  
Baltimore, MD

Albert Nunez, C.E.M.  
Capital Sun Group, Ltd  
Takoma Park, MD

Dagmar Fabian and Dave Slesinger  
Crabshell Alliance  
Baltimore, MD

Gwen DuBois  
Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility  
Baltimore, MD
Ellen E Barfield
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
Baltimore, MD

Alice Hirt
Don’t Waste Michigan
Holland, MI

Michael Keegan
Coalition for a Nuclear-Free Great Lakes
Monroe, MI

Keith Gunter
Citizens Resistance at Fermi 2
Livonia, MI

William S. Linnell
Cheaper, Safer Power
Portland, ME

Gladys Schmitz, SSND
Mankato Area Environmentalists (MAE)
Mankato, MN

Lea Foushee
North American Water Office
Lake Elmo, MN

Mark Haim
Missourians for Safe Energy
Columbia, MO

Kat Logan Smith
Executive Director
Missouri Coalition for the Environment
St. Louis, MO

Louis Zeller, Science Director
Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League
Glendale Springs, NC
E.M.T. O'Nan  
Director  
Protect All Children's Environment  
Marion, NC

Judith Anne Smith  
Toe River Valley Watch  
Spruce Pine, NC

Jim Warren, Executive Director  
*NC WARN*  
North Carolina Waste Awareness & Reduction Network  
Durham, NC

Lewis E. Patrie, MD, Chair  
Western N. C. Physicians for Social Responsibility  
Asheville, NC

Paula Gotsch  
Grandmothers, Mothers and More for Energy Safety (GRAMMES)  
Normandy Beach, NJ

Marianne P. Clemente, Secretary  
League of Women Voters  
Barnegat, NJ

Elizabeth Mozer  
S.U.M. - Stop Uranium Mining  
Montclair, NJ

Joni Arends  
Executive Director  
Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety  
Santa Fe, NM

Greg Mello  
Los Alamos Study Group  
Albuquerque, NM

Gay Dillingham  
Livingry Foundation
Santa Fe, NM

Douglas Meiklejohn, Executive Director
New Mexico Environmental Law Center
Santa Fe, NM

Judy Treichel
Executive Director
Nevada Nuclear Waste Task Force
Las Vegas, NV

Gary Vesperman
Chief Operating Officer and Director of Research
Blue Energy Corporation
Boulder City, Nevada

MaryJane Shimsky
Citizens for Safe Energy
Hastings-on-Hudson, NY

Judy Allen
Indian Point Safe Energy Coalition
Putnam Valley, NY

Alice Slater
Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, NY
New York, NY

David H. Ellison, AIA
Green Party of Cuyahoga County
Cleveland, OH

Chris Trepal
Earth Day Coalition
Cleveland, OH

Terry Lodge
Toledo Coalition for Safe Energy
Toledo, OH
Marilyn McCulloch  
Secretary of the Board of Directors  
The Carrie Dickerson Foundation  
Tulsa OK

Nina Bell  
Executive Director  
Northwest Environmental Advocates  
Portland, OR

Lynn Sims  
Don't Waste Oregon  
Portland OR

Rachel Larson  
Executive Director  
Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility  
Portland, OR

Chuck Johnson  
Director  
Center for Energy Research  
Portland, OR

Linda Richards  
DISARM committee  
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom  
Corvallis, OR

Kim C. Maynard  
Veterans Against Torture  
Eugene, Oregon

Gene Stilp  
Director  
Taxpayers and Ratepayers United  
Harrisburg, PA
Jay Sweeney
Green Party
Falls, PA

Gerald Rudolph
Carolina Peace Resource Center
Columbia, SC

Albert Bates
President
Global Village Institute for Appropriate Technology
Summertown TN

Cindy Weehler
Consumers' Energy Coalition and
Local Power/Energia Mia
San Antonio, TX

Scott Sklar
President
The Stella Group, Ltd.
Arlington, VA

Arnold Gundersen and Margaret Gundersen, President
Fairewinds Associates
Burlington, VT

Robert L. Stewart
New England Coalition *On Nuclear Pollution*
Brattleboro, VT

Mary Field Belenky
Vermont Yankee Decommissioning Alliance
Marshfield, VT

Margaret Harrington Tamulonis
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
Disarm! Dismantle the War Economy Leadership Team
Burlington, Vermont

Greg Wingard,
Executive Director
Waste Action Project
Seattle, WA

Charlie Higley, Executive Director
Citizens Utility Board of Wisconsin
Madison, WI

Jerry Brown
Fire Protection Defense League
Danbury, WI

John LaForge
Nukewatch
Luck, WI

Cc: Nancy Sutley, Chair, White House Council on Environmental Quality
Carol Browner, Assistant to the President for Energy and Climate Change
Steven Chu, Secretary of Energy
Harry Reid, Senate Majority Leader
Barbara Boxer, Chair, Senate Environment and Public Works Committee