We are here accepting this honor for the officials and residents of Nevada, the Nevada Congressional delegation, including the Senate Majority Leader and the thousand nationwide organizations that have supported us and that includes you.

It’s been about a quarter of a century since the Screw Nevada Bill named Yucca Mountain to be the national high-level nuclear waste dump. It took lots of energy and some work to reach this victory but it was really a fun ride and that’s why we never burned out.

Early on we realized that we had a huge advantage over the federal government and the wealthy and powerful nuclear industry. The battle was a sort of guerrilla war on our turf and we were the insurgents – but they weren’t allowed to kill us! They had regulations, guidelines and rules that they were supposed to follow and a very long, far away chain of command, but we were making it up as we went along. And their errors were obvious. They never had a video conference that worked for a whole meeting and we pointed out to everyone that TV and telephone stuff is really tricky but a nuke dump is easy! At one point there was a zealous headquarters’ director who decided that the employees had to be at work earlier and working harder because things were not getting done on time. So they began having video conferences starting in Washington at 8 but that was 5 AM in Las Vegas. After the first one, a secretary called me and said, “I don’t want to make things difficult for you but I know that you and Steve come to these meetings and if you plan to be here at 5 tomorrow morning, could you please come out today and pick up badges so that you can just let yourselves in? The video girl will come in and start things up for you.” So I did and we went at 5, let ourselves into the dark building, and when we got the lights on we found strategy stuff on the blackboards and tables with their notes and plans. The video girl showed up with her slippers on and asked if we could please turn off the equipment when we were done. Being a DOE employee was rough but being us was fun!

We wore out lots of people on the other side including several generations of PR groups sponsored by the nuclear industry, countless directors at DOE who worked for 8 Secretaries of Energy who served five different Presidents. They came and went but we stayed there, and with lots and lots of help, we were able to hold our ground until the site that never should have been selected for a million year nuclear waste dump was thrown out by a unique President who was willing to listen to a Nevada Senator who had worked to kill this project for most of his career.

The hardest and saddest time was the death of Nevada’s lead attorney, Joe Egan whose dying wish was that his ashes be scattered at Yucca Mountain, and the world put on notice that nuclear waste would go there only under his dead body.

Steve and I and a Native elder made that happen for Joe and his family and fortunately he will rest there at peace with the spirits of the Western Shoshone.
Throughout all this time, whenever we ranted about the flaws and disqualifiers at Yucca Mountain, DOE’s continual response was “there are no showstoppers.” Kevin Kamps of Beyond Nuclear had it right all along – We were, we are, and we continue to be – The Showstoppers. Thank you all very, very much.