

PRESS RELEASE

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SAFE ENERGY COMMUNITY TO DOE RADWASTE COMMISSION: STOP MAKING IT, STORE IT SAFER

Washington, DC-- Two safe-energy advocates representing the consensus recommendations of over 160 grassroots and national organizations presented to a DOE commission today a series of recommendations about what to do with the U.S.'s growing radioactive waste problem.

"The only real solution to the radioactive waste problem is to stop making it in the first place," said **Kevin Kamps**, radioactive waste specialist at Beyond Nuclear, a Takoma Park, MD-based nuclear industry watchdog group. "For the 63,000 metric tons of commercial high-level radioactive waste that already exists in this country, an interim first step to address safety and security risks is **hardened on-site storage** wherever feasible," he added.

Hardened onsite storage – or **HOSS** – employs use of improved versions of the existing dry-cask storage technology, coupled with hardened, scattered, and sheltered placements of the dry casks at existing reactor sites.

"**Reprocessing** the fuel is certainly not an answer," added **Susan Corbett**, Chair of both Sierra Club of South Carolina, and the Nuclear Issues Activist Team of the National Sierra Club. "We oppose reprocessing of irradiated fuel because it creates a larger volume of waste, does not really reduce radioactivity, and would add to the already incalculable radioactive burden of our state," she continued.

"For too long, South Carolina has been the nation's dumping ground for nuclear waste. The people of South Carolina are not interested in supporting new missions that create more long lived radioactive wastes that will remain in our state forever. We no longer trust DOE promises for exit strategies or solutions to waste disposition."

The two presented their recommendations at the fourth full Commission meeting of the DOE's **Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future (the BRC)**, held in Washington, D.C. The Commission was charged by President Obama with making recommendations on the nation's radioactive waste policies. The draft report from the BRC is due in summer, 2011.

Referring to a paper developed over a 6-month process by dozens of groups and co-signed by over 160 nationally, Kamps and Corbett articulated four key radioactive waste recommendations to the BRC:

- No reprocessing of radioactive waste
- Isolation of radioactive waste from the biosphere for as long as it remains a hazard
- Hardened storage and improved monitoring of the waste where it is currently stored
- Stop making radioactive waste

"The BRC will have failed in fulfilling its charter mandate to 'conduct a comprehensive review of policies for managing the back-end of the nuclear fuel cycle,' if it fails to conduct as thorough an investigation into these four principles as it has investigating options that lead to the continued production of more radioactive wastes," notes Paula Gotsch of GRAMMES: Grandmothers, Mothers and More for Energy Safety.

The document's recommendations stand in stark contrast to most industry promulgated comments heard by the BRC to date, which mostly advocate processes and technologies – like reprocessing -- which continue generating even more wastes, and aim to keep the nuclear industry operational.

“After six decades of failing to do so, we do not share the nuclear industry’s or Obama Administration’s optimism that either will now come up with magical techno-fix solutions to the radioactive problems that will be environmentally responsible and acceptable,” says Mary Olson of the Nuclear Information and Resource Service. “When it comes to radioactive waste management, currently the nation is left only with lesser-of-evil temporary storage choices, which we provided today.”

“The BRC needs to realize that there may actually BE NO ‘future for nuclear power in America’, because ‘stop making it’ is the first principle of waste management,” Dave Kraft, director of Chicago-based Nuclear Energy Information Service pointed out. “Both industry and government have refused to consider investigating this option, despite credible data to the contrary,” Kraft notes.

“While we all are very grateful that President Obama canceled the flawed and controversial Yucca Mt. project, we remain skeptical that the DOE’s BRC will give a fair and equal hearing and analysis to the ‘stop making it’ option” said, Judy Treichel of the Nevada Nuclear Waste Task Force of Las Vegas. “We are here today to assert that option.”

Numerous group representatives came from around the nation to attend today’s BRC meeting in support of the recommendations and make individual statements of their own.

Background:

After the de-funding and cancelation of the failed Yucca Mountain exploration site in 2010, President Obama simultaneously ordered DOE Secretary Dr. Stephen Chu to commission a fact-finding body to make recommendations on what the U.S. should do with its growing radioactive waste problem. In January, 2010, Dr. Chu announced formation of the Blue Ribbon Commission on America’s Nuclear Future, and named Lee Hamilton and Brent Scowcroft as co-chairs of the 15 person Commission. The BRC’s first meeting occurred in March, 2010.

The Commission has held numerous full and subcommittee meetings, hearing extensively from the nuclear industry, contractors and advocates for expanding nuclear waste generation. It is scheduled to release its draft report sometime in mid-2011 for review and comment, to be followed by the final report in 2012.

Despite three previous full meetings of the full BRC, and nine sub-committee sessions, this is the first time that the BRC has invited presentation from individuals representing a national cross-section of the general public to address the full Commission on these topics. The BRC presented a series of questions for consideration, on which the groups deliberated and reached consensus, resulting in today’s presentation. Individually, many of the organizations represented have attended previous sessions and made public comments, or posted them to the BRC website. Today’s was the first formal presentation before the whole BRC to articulate the broad consensus developed this past year through the work of over 30 grassroots and national organizations representing the concerns and recommendations of the general public.

The Full Text of the Document:

A complete copy of the 20-page “Response to Key Questions of the BRC” and cover letter can be viewed at:

<http://www.nirs.org/radwaste/hlw/finalbrcanswers111610.pdf>

<http://www.nirs.org/radwaste/hlw/coverlettertobrcanswers111610.pdf>