

May 7, 2002

Members of the Illinois House Delegation
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Yucca Mt. vote, scheduled for May 8, 2002

Dear Illinois Delegate:

Nuclear Energy Information Service is an environmental nuclear power watchdog organization based in Evanston, IL.. Founded in 1981, we have observed the development of the Yucca Mt. project from its inception. We write you now, asking you to support Nevada Gov. Kenny Guinn's veto of Yucca Mt., and vote against the site.

The vote on Yucca Mt. is not your run of the mill vote, that can easily be undone at some future date. It is a vote on a project which -- by law -- is mandated to keep some of the most hazardous substances humanity has ever created out of the environment for 10,000 years. The Congress therefore has a special obligation to get this right the first time. You, and your colleagues -- representing the most nuclear-reliant state in the U.S. -- will not have the luxury of some magical "second chance" at a later date, should Yucca fail to perform as needed.

Virtually all scientific news about the Yucca Mt. site over the past year have been negative, at best suggesting that now is NOT the time to be calling for a license application; at worst, suggesting outright disqualification of the site ([see attached sheet](#)). Any candidate defending a vote in favor of the Yucca Mt. site on the basis of "sound science" this autumn will have a great deal of explaining to do to constituents. If the Yucca Mt. process is their example of "sound science" creating public policy, many candidates will be in for a rude surprise in November.

Supporting Yucca Mt. will require vast improvements in our Nation's transportation system. A February 23, 2002 letter from the U.S. Conference of Mayors to President Bush -- signed by Chicago Mayor Richard Daley, and Arlington Heights Mayor Arlene Mulder -- calls serious attention to the transportation issue, stating, "As mayors, we are concerned that the Department of Energy (DOE) has not yet fully researched the methods for the transportation of nuclear waste." As a representative to Congress of those mayors, we believe that premature support of the flawed Yucca Mt. project would show a serious lack of regard for the legitimate concerns of these mayors who will have to deal with the transport problems caused by the tens-of-thousands of shipments of HLRW Yucca Mt. would unleash through Illinois.

Supporting something that is so dreadfully wrong -- as we believe Yucca Mt. is -- just because its proponents foster the herd mentality of "we have to do something with high-level radioactive waste" shows a dangerous lack of leadership quality. This is particularly true in the case of a project which has to "work" for 10,000 years in spite of vast uncertainties. If "progress" is allowed to be defined as merely moving forward, as merely "doing something," then jumping off the cliff could be considered "progress." How many constituents will follow this quality of reasoning and weak leadership remains to be seen in November. In any event, it fails to serve the public good.

There is probably no other Illinois environmental organization that would be happier to get HLRW out of Illinois than NEIS. We've struggled for this for the entire 20 years of our existence. However, even we realize that the "solution" is not to victimize someone else someplace else, in a flawed "file and hope they forget" scheme. When the several states begin treating each other on this manner to "solve" serious problems, then the precedent is set for Illinois to become the future "victim" of someone else's serious problem. We have to ask the not so rhetorical question, for example, of how eager the Illinois delegation would be to vote in favor of storing all ebola virus for research at some not-fully researched facility in Illinois -- forever, transporting the virus in canisters that have not been fully tested?

The environmental community has dedicated itself to come up with an environmentally sound alternative to the Yucca Mt. project. We wish to work with you and your colleagues in Congress to get this job done right -- the first and only time. But, in our view, the first prerequisite is to reject quick-fix, politically convenient choices wrapped in the guise of pseudo-science. That is all Yucca Mt. is, and this fact is not being lost on people back home. We wish to engage with you on defining and creating a truly workable, environmentally acceptable solution to the nation's high-level radioactive waste dilemma.

In our view, Yucca Mt. is not that solution. We strongly urge you to reject Yucca Mt., and help institute a process that will truly protect the public and the environment.

We are available to answer your questions, and work with your office on a truly effective solution to the Nation's HLRW problems.

Thank you for your consideration.

Stay well,

David A. Kraft Director