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HANK THOMPSON

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1 MR. THOMPSON: Thank you. Good evening, and I am Hank Thompson. I'm here representing Missouri State Senator William L. Clay, Jr. who's unable to attend this meeting because, of course, being in Jefferson City taking care of our business, but Senator Clay has written a statement and he would like for me to share this with you. It says that, "St. Louis has the distinct commercial and transportation benefit of being located in the center of our country. Major national highways and railways converge here in St. Louis and traverse our city and county communities.

The DOE's proposal, however, would turn St. Louis' central location into a health and safety liability for the citizens of this region. Seventy-nine of our nation's 103 operating nuclear power reactors are located east of the Mississippi River; while the Yucca Mountain Nuclear waste storage facility is located far to the west. Although the DOE has not made any commitments as to the specific routes, waste volumes or timing of this proposed massive shipping campaign, it is clear that routes through St. Louis, because of its unique location, are most likely to be the favored routes for this proposal.

Railroad corporations commit most of their track maintenance funds to their high volume rail lines, which specifically means large population and transportation centers such as St. Louis. Unfortunately, despite the sizable investment made by railroad companies, rail accidents still occur within our communities as well as on St. Louis bridges that span the Mississippi River. Additionally, vehicular accidents involving long-haul trucking and freight frequently occur on our highways.

I am concerned that when the decision is made as to what routes will be chosen for transporting this nuclear waste, our city will be the de facto winner. To open our roads and rail lines to the transportation of highly toxic and hazardous waste material that has accumulated over 30 years would be irresponsible. High-level radioactive waste must not be funneled through our densely populated region.

2 I believe the proposal being presented today is unacceptable. With all the critical questions that remain regarding the present and future viability of the Yucca Mountain geology and hydrology and its ability to effectively shield the radioactive materials from our environment, I believe that the DOE must step back from this proposal and reevaluate its options.

While the Draft Environmental Impact Statement seeks to demonstrate that it's possible to transport high-level waste across state lines and that a safer permanent disposal facility has been found, I believe such reassurances are unwarranted and premature, so I urge the Department of Energy to go back to the drawing board and defer its recommendation to Congress and the President until we have conclusive answers to the many troubling questions in this proposal.

3 In the interim, I believe our federal government should devote its efforts to improving the storage facilities on site at the nuclear plants themselves where the waste can be safely stored for decades until a truly safe national solution can be found. Thank you.