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The Honorable Gray Davis
Governor
The State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

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May 18, 2001

Dear Governor Davis:

The Department of Energy (DOE) has invited your comments on its consideration of a possible recommendation of Yucca Mountain, Nevada, for development as a permanent repository for high-level nuclear waste. I urge to consider the many unanswered questions about the transportation scenario for shipping waste from reactor sites across the country to Nevada, and to raise these issues with the Secretary of Energy.

The Yucca Mountain Project, if approved, would launch an unprecedented nuclear transportation scheme, with 77,000 tons of high-level radioactive waste shipments passing through 43 states, within half a mile of 50 million Americans. Likely transportation routes through our state include [see www.ymp.gov/timeline/eis/routes/routemaps.htm].

As the DOE rushes to recommend Yucca Mountain for development as a nuclear repository, many concerns remain about the suitability of site itself. In addition, many issues related to the large scale transportation of high-level waste through our state have not been addressed. Approximately 11,000 comments - more than half related to transportation concerns - were submitted on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Yucca Mountain Project, but the DOE has yet to respond.

Transporting high-level nuclear waste is inherently dangerous because it elevates the risk of radiological release and disperses this risk along transportation routes where our emergency response personnel may lack the training and equipment necessary to respond effectively to a radiological accident. Yet the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Yucca Mountain Project deals inadequately with the transportation scenario. For
1 example, the DOE has not specified which routes would be used for Yucca Mountain shipments or whether the waste would travel by train or by truck, and has not identified a clear process for making these decisions.

The canisters that would be used to transport nuclear waste to Yucca Mountain have not been subjected to physical testing, and computer models rely on outdated testing parameters. Unanswered questions remain about the risk of sabotage and liability in the case of an accident. Even without an accident, nuclear waste transportation canisters routinely emit the equivalent of one chest x-ray per hour of harmful radiation. Also, property values have been shown to decline along nuclear waste shipment routes.

Please ask the DOE to address these transportation issues before finalizing a site recommendation. I urge you to withhold support for the Yucca Mountain repository proposal until these concerns have been addressed and the feasibility of transporting nuclear waste to Nevada has been adequately assessed.

Sincerely,

Mark Reback
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c.c. Carol Hanlon, DOE
U.S. Representative Henry Waxman
U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer
U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein