STEVE LARGENT
1ST DISTRICT, OKLAHOMA

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
106 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-3601
(202) 225-2211
FAX: (202) 225-9187

DISTRICT OFFICE:
2424 E. 21ST STREET, SUITE 510
TULSA, OK 74114-1741
(918) 749-0014
FAX: (918) 749-0781

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3601

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
SUBCOMMITTEES:
ENERGY AND AIR QUALITY
TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND THE INTERNET
ENVIRONMENT AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS
OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

September 18, 2001

550989

RECEIVED
SEP 27 2001

Carol Hanlon, DOE
Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Office (M/S #925)
PO Box 30307
North Las Vegas, Nevada 89036-0307

Dear Carol:

Thank you for contacting me to express your interest in the future of American nuclear waste. It was good to hear from you.

As you may know, civilian radioactive waste ranges from the highly radioactive spent fuel from nuclear power plants to the far-less-radioactive uranium mill tailings that result from the processing of uranium ore. Most of the debate over civilian waste disposal focuses on spent fuel and on "low level" waste from nuclear power plants, medical institutions, civilian research facilities, and industry. The Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982 (NWPA) calls for disposal of spent nuclear fuel in a repository in a deep geologic formation that is unlikely to be disturbed for thousands of years. NWPA established an office in the Department of Energy (DOE) to develop such a repository and required the program's civilian costs to be covered by a fee on nuclear-generated electricity. Amendments to NWPA in 1987 restricted DOE's repository site studies to Yucca Mountain in Nevada.

DOE is studying numerous scientific issues in determining the suitability of Yucca Mountain for a nuclear waste repository, which must be licensed by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). As you know, questions about the site include the likelihood of earthquakes, volcanoes, groundwater contamination, and human intrusion. NWPA's goal for loading waste into the repository was 1998, but DOE does not expect to open the facility until 2010 at the earliest. DOE issued a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Yucca Mountain site in July 1999 and plans to apply for an NRC license in 2002 to build the repository.

In the 106th Congress, bills to modify the DOE civilian waste program have seen action in both houses. On February 10, 2000, the Senate voted 64-34 for a bill (S. 1287) to authorize waste shipments to the repository site if it receives an NRC construction permit. The House passed S. 1287 without amendment on March 22, 2000, by a vote of 253-167. I supported this bill. President Clinton vetoed the measure April 25, 2000, and a Senate override attempt on May 2, 2000, was unsuccessful.

I will continue to work in the 107th Congress to ensure that America's nuclear waste is

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

handled in the safest, most efficient manner. While many are quick to criticize the Yucca Mountain proposal, few have suggested better ideas. Until someone can produce an idea that is more effective than DOE's Yucca Mountain proposal, I will continue to back it as the best way to handle the long-term future of America's nuclear waste.

Thank you for sharing your views with me. Please feel free to contact me in the future regarding any issue of concern to you or your family.

Sincerely,

Steve Largent

Steve Largent
Member of Congress

SML:jay