CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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THOMAS J. DONOHUE
PRESIDENT AND
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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1615 H STREET, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20062-2000
202/463-5300 • 202/463-5327 FAX

October 12, 2001

Ms. Carol Hanlon
U.S. Department of Energy
Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Office
M/S # 025
Post Office Box 30307
North Las Vegas, Nevada 89036-0307

Re: Possible Site Recommendation for Yucca Mountain

Dear Ms. Hanlon:

I am writing on behalf of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the world's largest business federation representing more than three million businesses and organizations of every size, sector, and region, to express our show of support for use of Yucca Mountain as a spent nuclear fuel and high-level nuclear waste geologic repository.

Yucca Mountain is the most studied piece of real estate in the world. It has been considered as a possible nuclear waste repository for almost twenty years. More than one hundred studies have been completed, including analysis of climate, water flow, transportation of radionuclides in the environment, and site geology.

These studies demonstrate beyond any reasonable doubt that Yucca Mountain is a suitable site. The Preliminary Preclosure Safety Assessment for Monitored Geologic Repository Site Recommendation, Yucca Mountain Science and Engineering Report and other studies conclude that the radiation dose to the public and to repository workers during the time nuclear material would be placed at Yucca Mountain would be far below U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) requirements. These studies also indicate that even after closure, the dose from Yucca Mountain would be well below EPA and NRC standards for individual protection.

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The proposed repository is in a remote location. Yucca Mountain is located on federal land in Nye County, Nevada. The nearest substantial population center is Las Vegas, approximately 100 miles away. This location dramatically lessens any risk of exposure from the site.

Yucca Mountain has a dry climate and an extremely deep water table. It receives less than 6 inches of rainfall per year. This is critical as it reduces the possibility of seepage into the repository and lessens the likelihood that radionuclides will enter the zone beneath the repository or the water table. The water table is approximately 1600 to 2600 feet below the surface of the mountain. The repository would be located in the unsaturated zone, approximately 660 to 1600 feet below the surface, and, on average, approximately 1000 feet above the water table. Again, selection of Yucca Mountain as a nuclear waste repository would therefore not pose any significant risk to human health or the environment.

Consumers have committed $17 billion to the Nuclear Waste Fund from an ongoing fee on electricity generated by nuclear power, of which more than $8 billion remains unspent. Selection of Yucca Mountain would allow these funds to be used productively and for their intended purpose – disposal of nuclear waste.

Selection of Yucca Mountain is critical to U.S. energy policy. The repository is necessary to ensure the long-term viability of nuclear power, which generates 20% of the nation's energy and does not produce any greenhouse gas emissions.

Accordingly, the Chamber concludes that Yucca Mountain would be an excellent nuclear waste repository, and we strongly urge the Secretary to recommend its selection.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Donohue

cc: The Honorable Spencer Abraham
The Honorable Andrew Card
Andrew Lundquist