



January 22, 2002

The Honorable Geraldine Ferraro
President
G&L Strategies
Weber McGinn
2300 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 610
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Ms. Ferraro:

We were extremely disappointed last November to see you appear alongside Gov. John Sununu to launch a lobbying campaign in support of the proposed Yucca Mountain nuclear waste dump on behalf of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Alliance for Energy and Economic Growth. As national, New York-based, and Nevada-based environmental, public interest, and consumer advocacy organizations, we respectfully urge you to reconsider your position and resign as spokesperson for this misdirected campaign.

Studies conducted at Yucca Mountain demonstrate that the site is unsuitable for a geologic repository that is, it could not contain nuclear waste throughout its dangerous lifetime. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has revised its repository siting guidelines (10 CFR 960/963) to avoid disqualifying the site on this basis and has shifted to a reliance on "engineered barriers," or storage canisters, to contain the waste s radioactivity. It is very difficult to accurately predict, on the basis of such very limited experience, the performance of these storage canisters over the hundreds of thousands of years that high-level nuclear waste remains dangerously radioactive. However, given the intense heat and radioactivity that that nuclear waste emits, coupled with the potential for earthquakes and volcanism at Yucca Mountain, it is only a question of when not if these storage canisters would fail.

If radioactivity did leak from the proposed repository into the aquifer beneath Yucca Mountain, it could quickly contaminate the surrounding environment and the only source of drinking water for area residents. You say that as a mother and a grandmother you are sensitive to the legacies we leave our children. Residents of Nevada are deeply concerned about the legacy of contamination that the proposed repository would leave future generations. Sharing their concern, we find unacceptable an energy policy that relies on sacrifice zones and an "out of sight, out of mind" approach to the nuclear waste problem.

In your November 15th statement, you claimed that following the tragic events of September 11th, the long-controversial nuclear waste debate has suddenly become "clear-cut." In fact, September 11th did nothing to resolve the numerous outstanding technical, environmental, and policy issues that plague the Yucca Mountain Project. To the contrary, the repository proposal is exposed as reckless and irresponsible in light of the new terrorist threat. Repository design proposals feature massive, exposed surface facilities, which would establish a larger, highly vulnerable, and potentially more devastating target for attack nearby the major population center of Las Vegas. Meanwhile, stored waste would remain onsite at operating reactors across the country, since the proposed repository could not contain all the waste that U.S. reactors will generate during their licensed lifetimes.

Furthermore, transporting high-level radioactive waste to Yucca Mountain would threaten the health and safety of people all across the country. Routing projections indicate that Yucca Mountain shipments could pass through as many as 45 states, within half a mile of 50 million Americans. A severe transportation accident or terrorist attack could have catastrophic environmental and health consequences

and result in billions of dollars in damages, especially since emergency response personnel along the roads and railways may lack the capacity to respond effectively to a nuclear incident.

Like you, we see the need for a long-term strategy for nuclear waste management that will safely isolate this deadly substance from people and the environment. However, this need does not obviate the glaring deficiencies in the repository proposal. We hope you will reconsider your position on this matter and join us in opposing the Yucca Mountain Project.

Sincerely,

Wenonah Hauter
Director,
Public Citizen's Energy Program

Also on behalf of:

National Groups

Sara Zdeb
Friends of the Earth
Washington, DC

Jim Riccio
Greenpeace
Washington, DC

Kevin Kamps
Nuclear Information & Resource Service
Washington, DC

Martin Butcher
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Washington, DC

Alex Veitch
Sierra Club
Washington, DC

Chris Sherry
Safe Energy Communication Council
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Pierre Sadik
U.S. Public Interest Research Group (U.S. PIRG)
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Women's Action for New Directions (WAND)
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Nevada Groups

Kalynda Tilges
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New York Groups

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