

Alliance for Nuclear Accountability \* Arms Control Advocacy Collaborative \*  
Arms Control Association \* Citizens Action Coalition of Indiana \* Citizen Alert \*  
Council for a Livable World \* Federation of American Scientists \* Friends of the Earth \*  
GRACE Public Fund \* Greenpeace \* Healthy Environment Alliance of Utah \*  
Steven and Michele Kirsch Foundation \* Natural Resources Defense Council \*  
Nevada Nuclear Waste Task Force \* Nuclear Age Peace Foundation \*  
Nuclear Information and Resource Service \* Nuclear Policy Research Institute \* Nukewatch \*  
Nuclear Watch South \* Physicians for Social Responsibility \*  
Physicians for Social Responsibility-Wisconsin \* Public Citizen \* Snake River Alliance \*  
Southwest Research and Information Center \* Taxpayers for Common Sense \*  
Union of Concerned Scientists \* U.S. Public Interest Research Group \*  
Women's Action for New Directions \* Atlanta WAND

April 7, 2006

**Re: Oppose Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) funding for reprocessing irradiated nuclear fuel**

Dear Member of Congress:

As consumer, environmental, peace and security, public health, and taxpayer organizations, *we are writing to urge you to oppose funding for reprocessing irradiated nuclear fuel in the Fiscal Year 2007 Energy and Water Appropriations bill.* Reprocessing is extremely expensive and polluting, and would be a dangerous shift in U.S. global nonproliferation policy. Rather than solving our nation's nuclear waste problem, it would dramatically increase the threat from and complexity of dealing with nuclear waste from power plants.

The Administration's \$250 million request for the Advance Fuel Cycle Initiative (AFCI) is not in support of "research and development." Rather, the money would be used to site facilities and order equipment for the technological core of the proposed Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP), a massive and extremely expensive program that includes reprocessing irradiated fuel. Through this request, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is clearly trying to build momentum for the program before deliberations have been conducted by Congress to determine whether this path is in the best interests of U.S. national and energy security, as well as fiscally sound, even if it should eventually prove technically possible to proceed.

Since announcing GNEP in February, the DOE has yet to provide Congress with a lifecycle cost, or indeed any cost, analysis for the program. No reprocessing and transmutation program in the world has been commercially successful, and such a program in the United States would likely be paid for in full by U.S. taxpayers. According to a 1996 estimate by the National Academy of Sciences, reprocessing and transmutation in the U.S. will "easily" cost taxpayers \$100 billion. This estimate, however, is only for existing U.S. irradiated fuel, and does not include waste produced as a result of 20-year license extensions, waste from new domestic reactors, or the importation of foreign waste to the United States for reprocessing, as proposed under the GNEP program.

Reprocessing is also a threat to U.S. nonproliferation efforts, and would increase the likelihood that a terrorist could obtain fissile material to build a nuclear bomb. The "proliferation-resistant" reprocessing technologies that DOE is researching are not sufficient to prevent theft by terrorists. The materials, technical personnel, technologies and specialized equipment involved in these

processes could leak out, as they have in the past, to foreign clandestine weapons programs or be diverted within a state's program to make nuclear weapons.

Reprocessing would not eliminate the need for a geologic repository and would actually increase the number of radioactive waste streams to be managed. In fact, reprocessing is the most polluting part of the nuclear fuel cycle. U.S. taxpayers are still paying several billion dollars each year to clean up contamination from reprocessing programs in the 1960s and 1970s for nuclear weapons at the Hanford Site (WA) and the Savannah River Site (SC), as well as the reprocessing of naval irradiated fuel at the Idaho National Laboratory (ID) and commercial reprocessing at West Valley (NY).

Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman and other DOE officials have been very clear in their testimony to Congress that DOE does not know whether the full complement of necessary technologies, including reprocessing, fast reactors, and fuel fabrication, would ever work or be economically competitive. Yet, the budget request for the AFCI program allocates money for siting facilities, completing Environmental Impact Statements, soliciting commercial vendors, and ordering equipment for reprocessing, fast reactor, and fuel fabrication plants. Clearly, DOE is attempting to put "facts on the ground" by committing to immature technologies and creating constituencies before the technologies are close to ready for demonstration.

***We urge you to oppose the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership funding for reprocessing commercial irradiated fuel, which is requested under the guise of a research and development program.*** If you have any questions or need further information, please contact Michele Boyd at Public Citizen (202-454-5134).

Sincerely,

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Steven and Michele Kirsch Foundation

Karen Wayland, Legislative Director  
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