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WEST MICHIGAN ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION COUNCIL ♦ WOMEN'S ACTION FOR NEW DIRECTIONS ♦ YGGDRASIL

May 10, 2006

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

Dear House Appropriations Committee Member:

As consumer, environmental, peace and security, public health, and taxpayer organizations, *we are writing to urge you to oppose funding for reprocessing nuclear waste 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 Advanced 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 nuclear waste, 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,

Susan Gordon, Executive Director  
Alliance for Nuclear Accountability

Peggy Maze Johnson, Executive Director  
Citizen Alert

Terri S. Lodge, Coordinator,  
Arms Control Advocacy Collaborative

Grant Smith, Executive Director  
Citizens Action Coalition of Indiana

Daryl G. Kimball, Executive Director  
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Robert Kinsey  
Colorado Coalition for the Prevention of  
Nuclear War

Bobbie Paul, Executive Director  
Atlanta WAND

Joni Arends, Executive Director  
Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety

Jon Rainwater  
California Peace Action

John Isaacs, President  
Council for a Livable World

Gerald Rudolph, Coordinator  
Carolina Peace Resource Center, SC

Alice Hirt  
Don't Waste Michigan

Ivan Oelrich, Vice President for Strategic Security Programs  
Federation of American Scientists

Sara Zdeb, Legislative Director  
Friends of the Earth

Amb. Robert T. Grey, Jr.  
Director, Bipartisan Security Group  
Global Security Institute

Alice Slater, Executive Director  
GRACE Public Fund

Jim Riccio, Nuclear Policy Analyst  
Greenpeace

Jason Groenewold, Executive Director  
Healthy Environment Alliance of Utah  
(HEAL Utah)

Thomas B. Cochran, Director, Nuclear Program  
Natural Resources Defense Council

Judy Treichel, Executive Director  
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Southwest Research and Information Center

Kathleen Gwynn, President & CEO  
Steven and Michele Kirsch Foundation

Jill Lancelot, President/Co-Founder  
Taxpayers for Common Sense

Marylia Kelley, Executive Director  
Tri-Valley CAREs (Communities Against a  
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Stephen Young, Washington  
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Union of Concerned Scientists

Anna Aurilio, Legislative Director  
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