

Alliance for Nuclear Accountability ♣ Arms Control Advocacy Collaborative ♣
Arms Control Association ♣ Atlanta WAND ♣ Bellona USA ♣ California Peace Action ♣
Carolina Peace Resource Center ♣ Citizen Alert ♣ Coalition for Health Concern ♣
Coalition for Nuclear Justice ♣ Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety ♣ Council for a Livable World ♣
Federation of American Scientists ♣ Fernald Residents for Environmental Safety and Health ♣
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Healthy Environment Alliance of Utah ♣ Natural Resources Defense Council ♣
Nevada Nuclear Waste Task Force ♣ Nuclear Age Peace Foundation ♣
Nuclear Information and Resource Service ♣ Nuclear Policy Research Institute ♣
Nuclear Watch of New Mexico ♣ Nuclear Watch South ♣ Nukewatch ♣
Physicians for Social Responsibility ♣ Physicians for Social Responsibility – Wisconsin ♣
Public Citizen ♣ Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center ♣ Sierra Club ♣ Snake River Alliance ♣
Southern Alliance for Clean Energy ♣ Southwest Research and Information Center ♣
Steven and Michele Kirsch Foundation ♣ Union of Concerned Scientists ♣
U.S. Public Interest Research Group ♣ West Michigan Environmental Action Council ♣ Women's
Action for New Directions

May 23, 2006

Re: Support funding cuts to the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) for reprocessing nuclear waste

Dear Representative:

As consumer, environmental, peace and security, and public health organizations, *we are writing to urge you to support cuts in funding for reprocessing nuclear waste in the Fiscal Year 2007 Energy and Water Appropriations bill.* Rather than solving our nation's radioactive waste problem, reprocessing would dramatically increase the threat from and complexity of dealing with nuclear waste from power plants; cost U.S. taxpayers at least \$100 billion; and undermine U.S. global nonproliferation efforts.

DOE should not receive federal funding for developing reprocessing or transmutation technologies until it provides Congress with a comprehensive lifecycle analysis and plan. Without this information, Congress cannot determine whether this proposal is fiscally sound and in the best interests of U.S. national and energy security. Yet the report of the House FY2007 Energy and Water Appropriations bill found that "the Department of Energy has failed to provide sufficient detailed information to enable Congress to understand fully all aspects of this initiative, including cost, schedule, technology development plan, and waste streams from GNEP [Global Nuclear Energy Partnership]."

DOE has not been able to clean up contamination from reprocessing programs dating from the 1960s and 1970s. This year alone, more than \$2 billion is allocated in the House Energy and Water Appropriations bill to clean up reprocessing waste from nuclear weapons production 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). Tens of billions more will be required over several decades to continue cleanup at those sites and the failed commercial reprocessing site at West Valley, New York. Reprocessing wastes continue to threaten major water resources, including the Columbia River, the Savannah River, the Snake River Plain Aquifer, and Lake Erie, while cost estimates for cleaning up these sites continue to escalate. At Hanford, for example, the treatment plant for processing the high-level waste from past reprocessing has

soared from an estimated \$4.3 billion to \$11 billion in only three years, and the costs “are still not well established,” according to the House report. DOE says that its proposed reprocessing technology for GNEP would produce unique waste streams that would require developing new treatment, storage, and handling equipment, costing taxpayers even more money.

Despite spending more than \$100 billion globally, no country has successfully commercialized reprocessing and transmutation technologies. Such a program in the United States, estimated by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to cost another \$100 billion, would likely be paid for in full by U.S. taxpayers. The NAS estimate 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 waste from foreign reactors that the administration's proposal envisions coming to the United States for reprocessing.

Reprocessing also makes it easier for terrorists to obtain the fissile material needed to make nuclear weapons, and undermines nonproliferation efforts. The fact is that any reprocessing technology is more dangerous than leaving the weapons-usable plutonium bound up in highly radioactive, easy to track, bulky spent fuel rods. The new technologies DOE is researching are only marginal improvements on existing, decades-old processes, and inevitably make weapons-usable material harder to track and easier to lose. Moreover, a U.S. reprocessing program would only encourage other countries, dissuaded by U.S. opposition to reprocessing in the past, to pursue similar programs, further spreading technology that creates a direct path to weapons-usable nuclear material.

In addition, a site that is selected for a reprocessing plant would also become an indefinite storage site for U.S., and potentially foreign, radioactive waste. According to the House report, “a first test of any site’s willingness to host such a facility is its willingness to receive into interim storage spent fuel in dry casks...[I]f any site refuses to provide interim storage..., then that site should be eliminated from all further consideration under GNEP.” Under the GNEP program, foreign waste would be imported to the United States for reprocessing. This irradiated fuel, as well as the resulting reprocessing waste, would also be stored indefinitely at a reprocessing facility site.

We urge you to support amendments that cut the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership funding for reprocessing nuclear waste. If you have any questions or need further information, please contact Michele Boyd at Public Citizen (202-454-5134).

Sincerely,

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