

June 3, 2002

U.S. Senate

Dear Senator:

We write to urge your vote against the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository, Senate Joint Resolution 34.

Transporting 77,000 tons of deadly nuclear waste over our railways, highways, and waterways through 44 states and the District of Columbia presents the potential for a disaster of astonishing proportions. A crash or terrorist attack involving even one of these shipments through any one of our communities could be catastrophic, yet the Department of Energy's Yucca Mountain recommendation lacks a detailed plan for ensuring the safety of these shipments.

Problems at the site are equally troubling. Yucca Mountain failed to meet the standards originally required by law to qualify as a geologic repository, thus environmental and safety regulations have been downgraded to allow this dangerous project to proceed. The new regulations are tragically inadequate to ensure that radioactivity from a repository at Yucca Mountain would not contaminate the groundwater below.

We are therefore deeply concerned about the environmental justice implications of this project, which is likely to impose a disproportionate toxic burden on the Western Shoshone people as well as consumers of the water from the aquifer below. The Western Shoshone consider Yucca Mountain a sacred site and do not support the repository plan.

We also wish to draw your urgent attention to the lesser-known efforts of the "Private Fuel Storage" consortium to open a so-called "temporary storage facility" for high-level nuclear waste on the Reservation of the Skull Valley Band of Goshute Indians in Utah. The proposal would site 4,000 casks containing 44,000 tons of waste above ground, 60 miles from Salt Lake City and dangerously near the Dugway Proving Ground. This unprecedented private sector venture, opposed by members of the Skull Valley Goshute Tribe but negotiated privately between a disputed tribal "leader" and the nuclear industry, is now being challenged before the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

These proposals to dump high-level radioactive waste in Utah and Nevada are widely opposed by national environmental, public interest and Native American groups,

religious communities, health professionals, transportation safety specialists, and many state and federal officials. We add our voices to theirs in urging you to initiate oversight hearings on the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Nuclear Regulatory Commission's involvement in the Private Fuel Storage project, and to reject the Department of Energy's technically unfounded Yucca Mountain site recommendation.

Thank you for your attention to these issues, which affect the health and well-being of us all.

Sincerely,

Mike Farrell

on behalf of:

F. Murray Abraham
Alan Arbus
Edward Asner
René Auberjonois
Alec Baldwin
Ed Begley, Jr.
Harry Belafonte
Barbara Bosson
Bruce Boxleitner
Kathleen Chalafant
Stephen Collins
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Peter Coyote
James Cromwell
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Ossie Davis
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