Money Down a Hole: Yucca Mountain Appropriations

“DOE currently does not have a reliable estimate of when, and at what cost, a license application can be submitted or a repository can be opened…”

- General Accounting Office, May 23, 2002

The Yucca Mountain Project faces an uncertain future as the Department of Energy scrambles to resolve numerous technical issues in order to apply for a license to construct and operate the proposed nuclear waste repository. Given the DOE’s continuing history of disastrous cost overruns and project mismanagement, the oversized budget for this program is a waste of taxpayer and ratepayer money.

FY 2003 Appropriations

The House Appropriations Committee is recommending $524.7 million for the Yucca Mountain Project in FY 2003 – up 40% from FY 2002 – as part of a bloated Department of Energy budget that is $147 million over the President’s request and up $806 million from FY 2002.

$Spiraling Out of Control

The DOE has spent more than $8.6 billion (2002 dollars) on the repository program since its inception in 1982. The total cost of the Yucca Mountain Project is currently projected to reach $60 billion (2002 dollars), up 26% from the previous estimate. Actual costs will almost certainly exceed this projection. Congress should restrict funding to this program and exercise vigorous oversight in order to reign in this radioactive boondoggle.

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1 Testimony of Gary Jones before the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources