

F. JAMES SENSENBRENNER, JR.
FIFTH DISTRICT, WISCONSIN
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGY



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4905
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Hon. Phil Montgomery
Room 129 West
State Capitol
P.O. Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Hon. Montgomery:

Thank you for your recent letter regarding nuclear waste. It is a pleasure to address your concerns.


I understand that you are concerned with the management and disposal of spent nuclear fuel and would like Congress to expedite the implementation of federal policy on the management and disposal of high level radioactive waste set forth in the Nuclear Waste Policy Act (NWPA).

As you know, NWPA's goal for starting to load waste into a Yucca Mountain repository was 1998, but the Department of Energy (DOE) does not expect to open the facility until 2017 at the earliest. Furthermore, the DOE is studying numerous scientific issues at Yucca Mountain in preparing a license application to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the planned repository. Questions about the site include the likelihood of earthquakes, volcanoes, water infiltration and human intrusion.

You may be interested to learn that delays in the Yucca Mountain project have prompted proposals for a legislative redirection of the nuclear waste program. Earlier this month, the Bush Administration proposed a draft nuclear waste legislation, nearly identical to legislation it submitted to the 109th Congress, that was not enacted. The bill would reduce the scope of environmental reviews for the repository, change the budget scoring of waste fee receipts so that program funding could be increased more easily, exempt nuclear waste sent to Yucca Mountain from disposal requirements under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, and allow preemption of state and local transportation requirements.

I understand the frustrations that you, and the Wisconsin Legislature's Special Committee on Nuclear Power have regarding the delay of the Yucca Mountain repository facility. It will take time, and proper security measures must be adhered to in order to ensure the safety of our citizens, but I believe that we can build the Yucca Mountain repository safely and manage it safely. When this has been accomplished, we will be ready to expand our usage of nuclear energy. I'll be sure to keep your thoughts in mind if relevant legislation reaches the floor of the House of Representatives for a vote.

Sincerely,


F. JAMES SENSENBRENNER, JR.
Member of Congress