

**Testimony of Congresswoman Dina Titus
Nevada -1
House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Energy and Environment
Hearing Entitled: “Federal, State, and Local Agreements and Associated Benefits
for Spent Nuclear Fuel Disposal”**

Chairman Shimkus, Ranking Member Pallone, Ranking Member Tonko, members of the Subcommittee, I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify here today.

Yucca Mountain has been an issue of major importance to Nevadans for decades, dating back to 1987, when President Reagan signed the “Screw Nevada” bill into law.

In the years that have followed, I, along with my colleagues, both Democrat and Republican, in the Nevada Delegation, Governor’s Mansion, State Legislature, and local government together with leading business interests in our state have been unified, with rare exceptions, in vehement opposition to this failed proposal.

It is my understanding that today’s hearing is intended to suggest some benefit will accrue to Nevada for hosting nuclear waste generated elsewhere.

Well, on behalf of the 3 out of 4 Nevadans who oppose Yucca Mountain, I am here to say, we cannot and will not be bought off.

Mr. Chairman, after word of this hearing got out, I was contacted by major stakeholders throughout Nevada who wanted to weigh in and have their voices heard.

I have letters in opposition from the Nevada Resort Association, the Las Vegas Metro Chamber of Commerce, The League of Women Voters of the Las Vegas Valley, the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada, The Nevada Nuclear Waste Task Force, The Governor of Nevada, and the Democratic Leaders of the Nevada Legislature.

Prior to arriving in Congress, I spent a good bit of my time in the classroom as a professor of political science at UNLV, teaching, researching, and publishing on the politics of nuclear weapons and waste in Nevada.

Accordingly, I realize many do not know about or appreciate the significant contributions and major sacrifices that Nevada made during the Atomic Age.

More than 1,000 nuclear detonations occurred near downtown Las Vegas, where the mushroom cloud could be seen rising over the desert.

These tests took place at a time when the federal government conducted “duck and cover” drills to show us how to protect ourselves from radioactive fallout. Who among you remember the Civil Defense character, Burt the Turtle?

Today, billions of dollars have been paid to residents in Nevada, Utah, and other states that were under the radioactive cloud of the nuclear tests of the 20th century.

I give this history lesson not only to highlight the contributions that Nevada made to atomic development but also to remind you that they told us we were safe then, and they're telling us we're safe now.

Members of Congress may board a plane to my District and then be shuttled out to the desert north of town for a photo op where they can see the dry and desolate moonscape where Yucca Mountain is located. But they should not be fooled by such a superficial look at lands Nevadans love and want to protect. Southern Nevada is not a wasteland. It is home to unique desert habitats, rare and endangered species of plants and animals, iconic wildlife like Big Horn Sheep and Desert Tortoises, and cultural resources from Native American tribes dating back thousands of years.

Such a quick visit also ignores the fact that beneath the surface are major fault lines and a water table that moves toward the Las Vegas Valley. Furthermore, the waste to be stored has to be shipped thousands of miles across the nation on highways and byways that travel through small towns and big cities, farmlands and scenic preserves, near churches, schools, and neighborhoods in almost every Member's district. God forbid there be an accident.

A New Path

Fourteen years ago I stood alongside our Republican Governor Kenny Guinn and other leaders from across the State on the day he first vetoed the site selection of Yucca Mountain.

In the years that have followed, billions of dollars have been wasted on this boondoggle and still we are no closer to a solution.

It was not until the Obama Administration assembled the Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future that some of the most respected minds on this topic released a series of recommendations to guide us forward.

One such recommendation, which goes to the heart of the matter, is adopting a consent-based process by which repositories are sited.

That is why I joined with my colleague Joe Heck and our Senators Harry Reid and Dean Heller to introduce the Nuclear Waste Informed Consent Act.

If the Subcommittee is serious about addressing the issue of nuclear waste storage, then instead of rehashing the same issues over and over again, you should focus on a new direction.

Empty Promises

I've heard proponents make all kinds of false promises: Nevada will receive hundreds of millions of dollars for infrastructure projects or be allocated more water from the Colorado River, for example.

Who can take that seriously?

This Congress has failed in its response to nearly every pressing issue facing our nation. House Republicans could not even agree on a Budget this year, and yet again we are facing an omnibus/crominibus/minibus appropriations situation.

There is not even money for the completion of the Yucca Mountain project, much less extra bribe funding for Nevada. Ask Governor Nicki Haley of South Carolina what she thinks of the deal her state entered into with the MOX facility.

Conclusion

Nevadans may be gamblers, but we're not fools. We know how to calculate odds.

I ask you to remember that Nevada has done its part in the development of U.S. nuclear energy. Furthermore, we did not produce this commercial waste. We have no nuclear power plants. Keep it where it is, or pass our consent-based bill so places that want it, can have it.

I again urge my colleagues on this Subcommittee to concentrate efforts on ways to move forward, not backwards, so we can make real progress towards resolving this problem.

Thank you.