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U.S. Senate  
Committee on Environment and Public Works  
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I am Kevin J. Phillips, serving in my 14th year as mayor of Caliente, Nevada. Many citizens in Nevada and the nation understand that nuclear energy is an essential component of our country’s energy portfolio to provide for our baseload energy requirements while minimizing harmful emissions. Many Nevadans also believe that Nevada can and should play a major role in meeting our nation’s needs.

Nevada’s leadership would like the Congress to believe that all Nevadans adamantly oppose the development of the Yucca Mountain repository. This is not true. I personally know that most Nevadans are truly ill-informed as to the facts of this subject, and simply respond negatively to polls asking if they are in favor of the “dump.” Who wouldn’t respond this way when the question is framed in this manner, and in the context of their lack of knowledge regarding the issue?

There is a significant cross-section of the citizens of Nevada who want to help solve the national energy crisis and lead Nevada to become one of the most technologically and scientifically advanced regions in the world. These Nevadans are pragmatic, solution-oriented leaders who, first and foremost, want to ensure that the Yucca Mountain project is constructed in accordance with sound science and operated in a way that safety is always the number one consideration. We agree with the president and with Congress that the science conducted at Yucca Mountain confirms it to be a suitable site for a geologic repository.

Furthermore, we recognize that the same amount of used nuclear fuel and high level radioactive waste that is to be shipped to Yucca Mountain has already been shipped nationally and internationally without a single radioactive release that has resulted in harm to the environment or any individual. In fact, immediately upon the commencement of the used nuclear fuel shipments along the Caliente Rail Line, my citizens will experience a decreased amount of risk from hazardous material shipments. As a railroad town with very little emergency response resources, the citizens of Caliente are at risk every day with chlorine cars and other volatile substances. The increased emergency response capability that will accompany the shipments to Yucca Mountain will greatly enhance the everyday safety of my citizens from a risk management perspective.

Congress has a tremendous opportunity to make Yucca Mountain one of the most important and successful public works projects in the history of human existence. Washington has been given all the information it needs to make smart decisions that
accomplish this goal. You need to create an opportunity for real, meaningful economic diversification, and you need to start doing real things now rather than later. This project is far from being broken. Some synergy from you nudging this along is all that is required. If the Congress is truly committed to ultimate energy independence and energy security, this can be achieved.

I respectfully suggest that the Congress take the following steps:

- Change the name of the site at Yucca Mountain to the “National Energy Reserve at Yucca Mountain.” This modification highlights the value of what we truly are dealing with. This name change, coupled with the following additional suggestions, changes the way this project is viewed by the citizens of Nevada.
- Build the railroad from the city of Caliente to the National Energy Reserve at Yucca Mountain. The Record of Decision issued by the Department of Energy refers to this route as the “Caliente Corridor.” The Department of Energy has released the Draft Rail Alignment Environmental Impact Statement naming the Caliente Rail Corridor as the preferred corridor. After the Final EIS has been completed, they need to issue the Record of Decision on the specific alignment within the Caliente Rail Corridor and they need the funding to commence construction of the railroad.
- Ship used fuel to the National Energy Reserve. Here the fuel can further cool in a remote protected environment. Litigation pressures are relieved. Enhanced safety is achieved. The fuel is collected in a central location awaiting re-use.
- Change the name of the “Caliente Corridor” to the “Central Nevada Energy Corridor.” Numerous sites along this new rail line are prime locations for placement of new electrical generation power plants of various types. These “energy zones” could be pre-licensed and would provide for great incentive for companies to build new electrical generation resources, including nuclear, clean-coal, solar, wind and geothermal.
- Designate the National Energy Reserve as the location for the nation’s used fuel recycling facilities. Build such facilities as soon as time and technology permits. Do this in conjunction with Nevada’s university system. The Nuclear Waste Policy Act gives Nevada “preference” for such things. It makes total sense. Move the used fuel once. Recycle it. Place the small amount of “waste” left over deep underground in the repository. Move the new fuel assemblies to a nearby generation facility on the Central Nevada Energy Corridor and produce electricity.

The Nuclear Waste Policy Act was a progressive piece of legislation with many potential benefits for the State of Nevada. There are additional changes to the legislation that could minimize the risk for the citizens of the nation and specifically of Nevada while maximizing the benefits for those citizens and local governments most significantly impacted by Yucca Mountain. I hope that I and other likeminded leaders in Nevada will continue to be invited to provide innovative solutions as the Yucca Mountain project progresses.