

August 2, 2006

The Honorable Pete Domenici
Chairman
Subcommittee on Energy and Water, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-6030

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Coalition of Northeastern Governors (CONEG) recognizes the difficult challenges posed by the complex policy and technical issues surrounding permanent, safe and secure disposal of nuclear waste. Yet, we are deeply concerned and must strongly oppose language in the Senate Energy and Water Development Appropriations bill (H.R. 5427) that would suddenly shift long-established national policy on nuclear waste disposal by requiring commercial spent fuel to be stored at local or regional federal consolidated storage facilities in up to 31 states across the nation (Section 313).

We are concerned as well about the hasty timetable of the proposal. It is not adequate to evaluate fully the safety, security, environmental, transportation and infrastructure challenges associated with developing and maintaining multiple consolidated federal nuclear waste storage sites scattered across the country.

At the direction of the Congress, the federal government has a long-standing policy and contractual commitment with the nation's utilities and with their ratepayers to assume responsibility for high level nuclear waste and to develop a nuclear waste repository. Electricity ratepayers in our states and across the nation have upheld their part of the commitment by paying billions of dollars into the Nuclear Waste Fund for development of a permanent long term centralized facility. However, the Senate language in Section 313 undermines the federal commitment by diverting these much needed funds away from the intended purpose of creating a safe and adequately designed permanent nuclear waste repository and directs them toward a hastily created network of federal consolidated storage facilities. This action could delay development of a safe, secure, and environmentally preferable repository for high level nuclear waste. Such a facility is needed to meet contractual commitments, and will be needed even if advances are made in future reprocessing of appropriate nuclear waste.

It is vital that progress continue toward a permanent solution to the management of commercial spent nuclear fuel. Creating federal consolidated nuclear waste sites in locations that would never be chosen for such purpose in a site selection process – while further delaying the creation of a nuclear waste repository – is unacceptable. We urge the Senate to honor its existing commitment to ratepayers, states, and the nation's nuclear waste disposal program by rejecting the provisions contained in Section 313 of the FY 2007 Energy and Water Development appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

/o.s./

Donald L. Carcieri
Chairman
Governor of Rhode Island

/o.s./

James H. Douglas
Lead Governor for Energy
Governor of Vermont

Identical letters were also sent to Ranking Member Reid, Senate Leadership and Leadership of the Senate Appropriations Committee.