

Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
Oversight Hearing on Nuclear Waste Programs
April 11, 2013
Opening Statement as Prepared

The hearing will come to order. The purpose of today's hearing is to discuss the Administration's activities and proposals to address this country's nuclear waste.

I'd like to welcome our first panel of witnesses. Dr. Pete Lyons, Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Energy, it's good to see you again. And Mr. Michael Weber, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Deputy Executive for Operations for Materials, Waste, Research, State, Tribal and Compliance Programs, welcome to your first appearance before the subcommittee.

After we hear from these two witnesses about the Administration's current activities and proposals, and have a chance to question them fully, we will have a second panel to provide us with some perspectives from outside the Administration: Mr. Frank Rusco, Director of Natural Resources and Environment for the Government Accountability Office; Ms. Susan Eisenhower, former Member of the "Blue Ribbon Commission", and Dr. Rodney Ewing, Chairman of the Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board.

We all know that nuclear waste has been a controversial issue between Congress and the Executive Branch. While Yucca Mountain will not be the sole focus of this hearing, it will underlie many of our questions.

You cannot spend billions of taxpayers' dollars on a repository site in any state, in this case Nevada, and decades of analyses and studies, millions of man hours assuring that it is safe and secure, and then kill the project.

We will provide a fair hearing today, and it will be fair because we will incorporate Yucca Mountain into our discussions – not because we ignore it.

The Administration's latest budget request, released yesterday, again contains funding to implement some of the Blue Ribbon Commission's recommendations – recommendations which Congress has not approved, neither in whole or part. The Administration's proposals to address nuclear waste are little more than a blueprint for dialogue to get past Yucca Mountain. And no wonder – the Administration is faced with some very uncomfortable facts. For one, the longer this nation goes without taking responsibility for spent fuel, the higher the bill is to the federal taxpayer. At this point, liabilities are likely to be near \$20 billion. This liability is directly and entirely caused by the Administration's Yucca Mountain policy. In addition, the Administration's arguments in court that Congress has failed to provide funding to support the application at the NRC are patently disingenuous at best. I can understand the Administration's desire to sweep Yucca Mountain under the rug.

The future for nuclear waste disposal will be built upon substantive decisions— how to provide funding, and what sort of organization should manage waste and the facilities that hold it. These decisions will take time and many hearings in addition to this one.

Again, I welcome our many witnesses. I now turn to the Ranking Member for any comments she may have.

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