

Energy & Water Appropriations Testimony
Congressman Joe Wilson (SC-02)
March 8, 2017

I am grateful for the opportunity to meet with you today. First, I would like to thank Chairman Mike Simpson for his leadership as Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water.

I am grateful to represent South Carolina's Second Congressional District, a diverse and thriving community that is home to vital national security and environmental cleanup missions. Today, I will specifically address the necessity of fully resourcing the missions at the Savannah River Site in the Aiken-Barnwell community.

The Savannah River Site is home to the Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility (MOX), a valuable part of our non-proliferation and nuclear security. The MOX facility is currently 70 percent complete and, when completed, will be the nation's only facility that can convert weapons-grade plutonium into green fuel. Completing MOX is a secure and sustainable option for weapons grade plutonium, and brings the United States back in compliance with our international nonproliferation agreements. I am confident that after examining MOX with clear, unbiased data, it will be apparent that completing MOX is in the best interest of our national security.

The Savannah River National Lab conducts cutting edge research, supporting our nation's ability to produce tritium, to monitor and detect capabilities for nuclear non-proliferation, and to conduct nuclear forensics. It researches and provides improved technologies for safely storing and transporting high-level radioactive waste.

The Savannah River Site is home to other critical Department of Energy nuclear security and environmental cleanup missions as it safely processes Cold War era nuclear materials into stable materials that can be stored until disposal. Last year, the Site completed construction of the Salt Waste Processing facility, greatly enhancing the speed and efficiency of the remediation of high level waste. Other critical facilities include H-Canyon, the nation's only production scale nuclear chemical separations plant, and both K and L areas, which safely store nuclear materials. All of the missions at the Savannah River site are vital to bolstering our national nuclear capability and safe environmental stewardship.

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Since 1952, the Savannah River Site has played a critical role in processing and disposing of high-level defense waste. However, the Savannah River Site was never intended to be a long-term option for high level waste—and lacks the ability to serve as a permanent repository. The only viable permanent repository is Yucca Mountain.

I strongly urge the Appropriations Committee to allocate funding specifically for the completion of Yucca Mountain license application. Abandoning Yucca Mountain in favor of a non-existent alternative would leave communities across the United States, including the Aiken-Barnwell community in the Second Congressional District, to bear the burden of storing nuclear waste the federal government has promised to remove. Additionally, American ratepayers have put enormous resources to completing the nuclear storage facility at Yucca Mountain. I believe that the completion of the license application will highlight the technical merits and alleviate any environmental concerns.

I appreciate the difficult decision the Committee must make as we begin the appropriations process for fiscal year 2018. Thank you for your time, and I urge you to continue supporting the vital missions at the Savannah River Site and at Yucca Mountain.

Thank you.