

TESTIMONY OF
CONGRESSMAN WM. LACY CLAY (D) MISSOURI
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE ECONOMY
WEDNESDAY, JULY 13, 2016
WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Tonko, and Ranking Member of the Full Committee Mr. Pallone, honorable members of this subcommittee,

I want to thank you for the special invitation that you have extended to Congresswoman Wagner and myself to appear before you this morning in support of our critical, bipartisan legislation to advance the long-delayed clean-up of West Lake Landfill in Bridgeton, Missouri.

Our legislation, HR 4100, which is identical to the Senate version which has already passed with overwhelming bipartisan support, would transfer primary responsibility for the cleanup of West Lake Landfill from the Environmental Protection Agency to the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers Formally Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program...(FUSRAP) which is already hard at work across the nation and at several locations in the St. Louis area...cleaning up our nation's legacy of radioactive and toxic contamination from weapons production.

The bill before you was crafted with strong grass roots support from the Missouri Coalition for the Environment, Just Moms St. Louis (whose courageous founders are here today); and many other civic environmental activists to address a 74-year old nuclear

legacy in St. Louis which has subjected families to fear and suffering for far too long.

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In 1942, the War Department secretly contracted with Mallinckrodt Chemical in St. Louis to enrich yellow cake uranium from the Belgian Congo to fuel the Manhattan Project.

That enriched uranium, prepared with the assistance of Nobel Prize winning physicist, Dr. Arthur Holly Compton, of Washington University...was used to fuel our nation's first atomic bombs created at Los Alamos, New Mexico...under the director of the Manhattan Project, J. Robert Oppenheimer.

That program, which existed from 1942 - 1945, was essential to winning World War II.

But the nuclear waste that was generated from the manufacturing of those original atomic bombs and others that would follow, forged a curse of radioactive contamination that is still inflicting pain and suffering on my constituents today.

After World War II, that waste and several failed attempts to clean it up...caused dangerous, radioactive contamination at sites in Downtown St. Louis, at Lambert St. Louis Airport, at Latty Avenue in North St. Louis County, at Cold Water Creek...which is a tributary that flows into the Mississippi River, ...and finally, in 1973....approximately 50,000 tons of that same nuclear waste was illegally dumped at West Lake Landfill in Bridgeton, Missouri and mixed with other debris.

That nuclear waste includes:

Radioactive uranium.

Radioactive thorium.

Radioactive barium sulfate.

And other toxic contaminants.

**Unbelievably, that radioactive, toxic mess...
dumped illegally at West Lake 43-years ago, is
held in an unlined, limestone landfill...**

Near the Missouri River,

Near a major hospital,

Near Lambert St. Louis International Airport,

Near schools and interstate highways...

And, most troubling of all...

**Is the appalling fact that 1,000 of my
constituents live less than a mile away from
this illegal nuclear waste dump.**

The truth is that if you searched far and wide across this country...

It would be almost impossible to find a dumber, more dangerous, more completely irresponsible place to dump nuclear waste... than West Lake Landfill.

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And if you think this potential environmental disaster couldn't get any worse...you're wrong.

For the last four years...we have also been dealing with a creeping, underground landfill fire at the adjacent Bridgeton Sanitary landfill...which is under the control of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

And that underground fire is less than 1000 feet away from the buried nuclear waste.

My friends, the United States government created this radioactive mess.

And then, we allowed it to metastasize to other sites including West Lake...

And we have a clear and unavoidable responsibility to finally clean it up.

That is what HR 4100 is all about.

Our legislation builds on the highly successful track record of FUSRAP which is already cleaning up the same nuclear waste at other locations across the St. Louis area.

It is fiscally responsible, because even after the transfer of West Lake to the Army Corps of Engineers...the site would remain on the Superfund list, which would preserve revenue streams to help fund the cleanup from several potentially responsible parties...including the

Department of Energy, Republic Services and the Cotter Corporation.

This bill has earned the bipartisan support of Democrats and Republicans, religious coalitions, community activists, and respected scientific sources who believe that a cleanup like this should be put in the hands of those who have the strongest possible expertise in cleaning up nuclear waste...the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

A few months ago, this identical legislation, introduced by my Missouri colleagues, Senators Blunt and McCaskill, was embraced and approved by a huge bipartisan majority in the U.S. Senate.

Congresswoman Wagner and I introduced HR 4100 as a companion bill on the House side, and almost immediately...

Some of the forces who want to keep this nuclear waste in the unlined West Lake Landfill, ganged up to stop it.

And I am greatly disappointed that this common sense bill has been delayed, obstructed, and even deliberately misrepresented by some staff and certain members of this committee...

My friends, after 74-years of negligence by the United State government, that is totally indefensible.

Now I recognize that there are factions who oppose this bill because of cost concerns.

I also know that some oppose this timely and wise solution to cleaning up West Lake for purely selfish and political considerations.

**But none of that matters to the real people
whom I represent who still live in fear because
of West Lake landfill.**

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So let me say this to all of you...

**As my colleagues, and as my honorable friends
in service to this country...**

**When the United States government makes a
mistake;**

When we put citizens at risk;

When we disrupt their lives;

**When we destroy the peace and property
values in their neighborhoods;**

**And when we allow the health of innocent
citizens to be harmed because of our own
inaction...**

We must make this right.

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I was the first Member of Congress to call for the complete removal of all nuclear waste from West Lake landfill...and I will continue to demand that.

The United States government created this nuclear mess at West Lake...and we have a responsibility to pass this bill and clean it up.

I ask you all to search your consciences...and to think about my constituents who live in fear, think about those who are already sick, think about this 74-year old federal problem...and remember that we have the power to fix this.

74-years is too long to wait...let's pass HR 4100. Thank you.