

Written Statement
Prepared for the Committee on Energy and Commerce
For Subcommittee on Environment Hearing on April 26th, 2017

By
Rep. Ruben J. Kihuen, NV-04

Summary:

- Yucca Mountain is in Rep. Kihuen's district, his constituents and Nevadans deserve a voice in the process
- Nevadans are strongly opposed to storing nuclear waste in Yucca Mountain
- This legislation threatens the safety and economy of Southern Nevada
- No one on the committee would want this in their district

Thank you, Chairman Shimkus, and Ranking Member Tonko, for the opportunity to testify before today's subcommittee hearing and I am grateful that you could accommodate my request despite the short notice.

I was disappointed to learn of that the committee had scheduled a hearing on the Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act of 2017, especially considering that there was no representation from our great state on this committee. As I mentioned in my letter, Yucca Mountain is in my district and my constituents – and all Nevadans – have the right to have their voices heard. They deserve to be part of the conversation, especially when it concerns their safety and security. To Nevadans, it seems like other people are just trying to pawn off their problems by dumping nuclear waste in our beloved state.

For many Nevadans, this just feels like *déjà vu*, and is reminiscent of the passage of the 1987 law, often correctly referred to as the “Screw Nevada Bill,” that halted the study of possible repository sites, elsewhere in the country, over the vociferous objections of the state. Now, as in 1987, the idea that Nevada should be used as nothing more than a dumping ground for the rest of the country's nuclear waste is opposed by most Nevadans. Democrat and republican alike, Nevadans do not want this project to move forward in their state.

Yucca Mountain is located less than 100 miles northwest of Las Vegas, a metropolitan area of more than 2 million people, more than 3 times the entire population of Nevada when this bad idea was first passed.

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The proposed nuclear waste repository site at Yucca Mountain would pose a real threat to the economy of southern Nevada. Our economy relies on tourism, with nearly 43 million people visiting Las Vegas in 2016. Any accident involving nuclear waste in the area would lead to a massive loss in visitors, which in turn would have severe ripple effects through the entire Nevada economy.

Many of you may not know it, but the area around Yucca Mountain is seismically active, and an aquifer runs beneath the proposed repository site. Additionally, placing a large amount of nuclear waste in an unsuitable site like Yucca Mountain could lead to numerous potential health issues. Substandard care or the mere passage of time could lead to leaking and leaching of nuclear material into the aquifer.

Rather than waste millions more on unnecessary nuclear waste, we should look for ways to invest these funds in Nevada more strategically. Plenty of Nevadans are still out of work. Imagine what this money could do to help grow our economy. I have toured Nevada's fourth Congressional District on multiple occasions. Every time I visit I see first-hand the need to invest in infrastructure projects that could create jobs. Dumping money into this project is a poor use of federal funds.

Nevadans are strongly opposed to the construction of this project. As a state with no nuclear energy facilities, it is exceedingly unfair that Nevada is asked to serve as the dumping ground for the rest of the country's waste at great risk to our citizens.

I ask each of you on the committee to consider this: if this project was proposed in your district, near your family and threatened your constituent's lives and jobs, would you support it?

If the answer is yes, then let's find a place in your district. If the answer is no, as it surely is, you cannot in good conscience vote to send the country's waste to my district.

I urge the committee to vote no and keep this project dead and buried as it should be.