

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF
REPRESENTATIVE ROBERT J. DOLD
BEFORE THE HOUSE ENERGY AND COMMERCE COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND THE ECONOMY

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Good morning Chairman Shimkus, Ranking Member Tonko, and members of the Subcommittee. My name is Bob Dold, and I represent Illinois' 10th Congressional District. I thank you for the opportunity to testify today about the community of Zion, Illinois, and about H.R. _____, the *Stranded Nuclear Waste Accountability Act of 2016*, a bipartisan bill I introduced this week to fairly compensate the thirteen communities across the country that are affected by the federal government's failure to make good on its commitment to remove spent nuclear fuel from formerly operating nuclear power plant sites. Each of the thirteen communities is home to a formerly operating nuclear power plant site that is still used to store spent nuclear fuel.

Zion, Illinois, is a city in the northern part of Lake County, Illinois. Zion is home to approximately 25,000 people, and it lies approximately halfway between Chicago and Milwaukee. The city's location midway between these two major metropolitan areas made it an advantageous site for a power plant. In 1973, Zion Nuclear Power Station opened on 257 acres of Lake Michigan shoreline. The plant operated from 1973 to 1998, when the plant ceased operations.

Zion undoubtedly benefited from having the Zion Nuclear Power Station in operation over those 25 years, as it created good, high-paying jobs for the community. Unfortunately, once the plant closed, those benefits to the community went away. Since 1998, the community has faced a difficult situation due to the presence of spent nuclear fuel on the site. As this Committee is well aware, the failure to move ahead with plans for the Yucca Mountain permanent repository means that there is simply no place to take spent nuclear fuel. As such, the end result is that the spent nuclear fuel remains on the grounds of nuclear power plants across the country, both those still in operation and those that have closed.

For Zion, and for the dozen other communities in the same situation, the failure to finalize a permanent spent nuclear fuel storage location means that these communities have in essence become long-term spent nuclear fuel storage sites. Without the ability to remove the spent nuclear fuel to a safe, long-term geologic disposal site, the fuel will simply remain where it was last used: in the middle of Zion, within 300 yards of the shore of Lake Michigan.

When the Zion Nuclear Power Station opened, no one anticipated that Zion would eventually become home to a spent nuclear fuel storage site. But that is in essence what Zion has become. The community never agreed to be transformed into a long-term spent nuclear fuel storage site. Its *de facto* status as such has meant that the community is bearing all of the costs of hosting a nuclear power plant location without any of the benefits. I have brought with me today two letters, one from the Mayor of the City of Zion, Al Hill, and the other from 34 local elected officials and community leaders in the Zion area. Both of these letters detail the impact hosting a spent nuclear fuel storage site has had on their community, and I would respectfully request to submit these letters for the record.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Tonko, and members of the Committee, that is the problem facing Zion and 12 other communities like it across the country. The best solution, of course, is to move ahead with a long-term disposal location for spent nuclear fuel and get this spent fuel out of Zion. But so long as the federal government fails to deliver on its commitment to provide a long-term storage facility to take spent nuclear fuel, these thirteen communities, including Zion, should be fairly compensated for their *de facto* status as interim spent nuclear fuel storage sites.

In the original Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982, Congress established a regime for compensating communities that agreed to become home to interim spent nuclear fuel storage sites. No such location has ever been designated under the NWPA, and consequently no community has ever received compensation from the federal government for being an interim spent nuclear fuel storage site. This means that the federal government has in essence been a free rider on a nuisance it itself has created for communities like Zion.

On Tuesday, I introduced H.R. _____, the *Stranded Nuclear Waste Accountability Act of 2016*. This bill recognizes this problem that the federal government has caused by failing to open a long-term storage site at Yucca Mountain. For communities like Zion, where the community is home to a formerly operating nuclear power plant but where spent nuclear fuel continues to be stored, the federal government would pay to the local government a fee to compensate that community for their status as *de facto* spent nuclear fuel storage sites. That fee is the same amount per kilogram as was included in the original Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982. The funds for compensating these thirteen communities will be appropriated out of the General Fund. Importantly, this bill puts a seven-year term on these funds so that these communities are fairly compensated, but do not become indefinitely dependent.

The political failure to move ahead with Yucca Mountain has created an unfortunate situation for Zion and communities like it across the country. These communities are carrying, uncompensated, the burden of our entire country to store spent nuclear fuel. Without negotiation and without compensation, these communities have been transformed into spent nuclear fuel storage sites. While the best solution is still to find a way to make sure spent nuclear fuel is removed from these communities, in the interim, my bill is a common sense proposal to help compensate these communities and defray some of the impact associated with storing spent nuclear fuel there.

Chairman Shimkus, Ranking Member Tonko, and members of the Committee, I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify today and to present to you information about the impact the failure to move spent nuclear fuel has had on communities like Zion. I would like to thank Representatives Courtney and Welch for their support. I thank you all, and would be happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.