

**DOC HASTINGS**

4TH DISTRICT, WASHINGTON

**COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS  
OF OFFICIAL CONDUCT**  
RANKING REPUBLICAN MEMBER

**COMMITTEE ON RULES**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON RULES  
AND ORGANIZATION OF THE HOUSE**  
RANKING REPUBLICAN MEMBER



1214 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
(202) 225-5816

2715 SAINT ANDREWS LOOP, SUITE D  
PASCO, WA 99301  
(509) 543-9396

302 EAST CHESTNUT  
YAKIMA, WA 98901  
(509) 452-3243

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

April 1, 2008

The Honorable Dirk Kempthorne  
Secretary  
United States Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW, Room 7256  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Kempthorne:

I wanted to first thank you for reappointing the full National Park System Advisory Board. I also want to urge the Department to ensure that the Board meets as soon as possible to consider a proposal that would grant National Historic Landmark status for Hanford's historic B Reactor. Timely consideration of B Reactor's National Historic Landmark preservation proposal is of great importance to the local community and me.

I appreciate your previous action to administratively convene the Advisory Board's Landmarks Committee in December 2007. As you know, the Landmarks Committee unanimously recommended National Historic Landmark status for B Reactor. I was pleased to testify at this meeting and encouraged by this important step forward.

However, without the approval of the full Board and your personal approval, the future preservation of B Reactor remains in question. I urge you to do all that you can to enable the Board to meet as soon as possible so that the final B Reactor nomination can be considered this year.

Attached is my testimony from the Landmarks Committee meeting, which will provide more detailed explanation of my support for the B Reactor proposal. I hope you will consider it when making a final decision on the B Reactor's National Historic Landmark status.

I appreciate your assistance with this important issue. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doc Hastings".

Doc Hastings  
Member of Congress

**Congressman Doc Hastings  
Testimony  
Before the Landmarks Committee of the  
National Park System Advisory Board  
December 5, 2007**

Thank you for allowing me to testify today about the National Historic Landmark proposal for the Hanford site's historic B Reactor. I am strongly supportive of this proposal, and I hope that you will agree that the B Reactor is worthy of this designation.

From a historical standpoint, the B Reactor represents a part of our nation's past that should not be forgotten. Hanford's nuclear history began in the 1940's and nuclear material production played a pivotal role in our nation's defense for more than 40 years. As part of the Manhattan Project – the World War II effort to develop and construct the first atomic bomb – the work done at Hanford was an integral part of ending World War II. Later, nuclear weapons production at Hanford helped provide the nuclear deterrence to win the Cold War and bring an end to the Soviet Union.

One of the key components to Hanford's nuclear production success was the B Reactor. In 1943, only months after Enrico Fermi first demonstrated that a controlled nuclear reaction was possible, ground was broken on the B Reactor – which became the world's first full-scale plutonium production reactor. As part of the Manhattan Project, the B Reactor produced the plutonium for the first ever manmade nuclear explosion – the Trinity test in New Mexico. Later the B Reactor produced the plutonium for the bomb dropped on Nagasaki that helped end World War II.

I believe B Reactor's designation as a National Historic Landmark would be a worthy addition recognizing Central Washington's contribution to the beginning of the nuclear age. I've toured B Reactor many times and it is like stepping back into the 1940's, because it has been left largely intact. Touring B Reactor gives you a very real sense of what it was like to work there. For those who didn't live through World War II – and as we age, that population continues to decrease – the B Reactor helps tell the story of the time and of the workforce that contributed to our nation's defense for so many years. By preserving B Reactor, we will be able to preserve for future generations a historical structure in our past in a way that no textbook or video ever could.

For years I have been working to ensure that B Reactor's history is remembered. In 2003 I authored a law that directed the National Park Service to consider preservation options for B Reactor and other Manhattan Project sites. This study is expected to be completed next year. As part of a preliminary report for this study, the Park Service noted that the B Reactor and its surrounding facilities are “modern marvels of engineering” and that the B Reactor itself “retains a high degree of integrity.” A National Historic Landmark designation for B Reactor would be an additional step to protect this important structure as the Department of Energy and National Park Service consider long term preservation options.

Fortunately, because of past decisions of the National Park System Advisory Board and this Committee, many historic Manhattan Project sites already have the recognition and

preservation status that comes with a National Historic Landmark designation. Today, Americans can visit the site of the first self-sustaining nuclear reaction at the National Historic Landmark in Cook County Illinois, see first-hand the smaller precursor to the B Reactor at the X-10 Reactor National Historic Landmark in Oak Ridge Tennessee, tour the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory National Historic Landmark in New Mexico, visit the National Historic Landmark of Gilman Hall at Berkeley where plutonium was first discovered, and see the National Historic Landmark Trinity Site in New Mexico.

These sites are all important, but alone they do not tell the complete story of the Manhattan Project. Hanford was where all the scientific knowledge developed by the Manhattan Project was ultimately implemented. At Hanford, the B Reactor proved that America had passed the point of research into nuclear technology and had officially entered the nuclear age. If we are to tell the story of the Manhattan Project in its entirety to future generations, Hanford's B Reactor deserves this federal recognition.

In addition to its role in the Manhattan Project and its contribution to our national defense, B Reactor also has a special place in the history of nuclear energy. As the first full scale reactor of its kind, the B Reactor influenced the design of nuclear reactors for generations. Had scientists not worked out many of the problems in the early days of the B Reactor, the nuclear production of electricity as we know it today may not have been possible.

B Reactor's national significance has long been recognized by those in the nearby Tri-Cities area. With local support, B Reactor was declared a Civil Engineering Landmark in 1968 and it was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1992.

The Tri-Cities community has worked hard over the years to support recognition of B Reactor, and to prevent its demolition. In fact, at the end of the Cold War – when B Reactor faced the possibility of closure – the B Reactor Museum Association was formed to preserve the preservation and history of reactor. Local groups such as the Tri-City Industrial Development Council, the Tri-Cities Visitor & Convention Bureau, the Hanford Communities, and others lent their support and persuaded leaders across Washington state to support B Reactor preservation.

Local Hanford historian Dr. Michele Gerber – who played a key role in the National Historic Landmark proposal – has also been a tireless advocate for B Reactor preservation. Time after time it has been local citizens who have worked tirelessly to highlight the national significance of B Reactor. We are proud of the historic role that Hanford workers played during the middle part of the 20th Century and we are proud of the engineering marvel that Hanford workers built out in the desert. It is astonishing that this was built and in production in less than a year during the height of World War II. It deserves to be preserved, and the stories of the workers should be retold for generations to come.

Recognizing the B Reactor as a National Historic Landmark has my support as well as the support of the Tri-Cities community. They believe the B Reactor deserves the highest recognition from the federal government for historic preservation. Thank you for your consideration of this designation.