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4TH DISTRICT, WASHINGTON

**COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES**
RANKING REPUBLICAN MEMBER



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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

October 20, 2009

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

Under current law, Yucca Mountain is our nation's permanent high-level nuclear waste repository. Current law provides no alternative repository site to Yucca Mountain, and it does not authorize the Department of Energy to open temporary storage facilities without a permanent repository in operation. I fully support moving forward with ongoing efforts to complete Yucca Mountain. Recognizing, however, that the Administration has abandoned Yucca Mountain, I write to inquire about the status of your plan to develop a new option for our nation's defense waste and commercial high-level nuclear spent fuel.

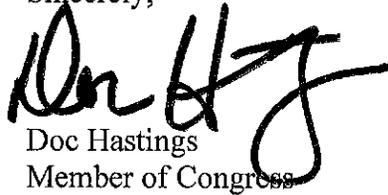
My congressional district is home to the Department of Energy's Hanford site. Hanford was an integral part of our nation's nuclear weapons program for many years, and today is our largest and most complex Environmental Management cleanup site. High-level nuclear waste from Hanford is required to go to a national repository. My district is also home to the only operating nuclear power plant in the Pacific Northwest. Clearly, any decision about the disposition of commercial nuclear spent fuel and weapons complex high level waste will directly impact the communities I represent in Congress.

Given the importance of this issue to Central Washington state, I would appreciate an update on your efforts to address the federal government's nuclear waste storage obligations. Specifically: 1) what are the scientific reasons why Yucca Mountain is not a feasible option, 2) how long will the new studies take and how much will they cost, 3) what will be studied, 4) will the blue ribbon commission have the freedom to study any option they deem appropriate – including Yucca Mountain, 5) will sites that were previously considered, such as Hanford, be studied, and 6) how and when will members of the blue ribbon panel be selected?

I also request a complete explanation of the federal government's legal liabilities and obligations regarding both defense and commercial nuclear spent fuel given the additional delay in opening a national repository. To be complete, such a review must include defense waste at Hanford and similar cleanup sites, and not be limited to spent nuclear fuel from commercial reactors.

I am hopeful that as a blue ribbon panel is formed, this process will move forward in an open and transparent manner and that decisions will be based on science that covers all of the nuclear waste intended for Yucca Mountain. Thank you for your attention to this request. I look forward to learning more about plans for a blue ribbon panel from your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doc Hastings". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "H".

Doc Hastings
Member of Congress