

# BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON AMERICA'S NUCLEAR FUTURE

November 9, 2011

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290 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Joe Wilson  
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Representative Tim Scott  
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Representative Jeff Duncan  
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Representative Trey Gowdy  
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Representative Mick Mulvaney  
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Washington, DC 20515

Representative James Clyburn  
2135 Rayburn House Office Building  
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Dear Members of the South Carolina Congressional Delegation:

Thank you all for your letter of October 27<sup>th</sup>. We appreciate hearing your views on the Yucca Mountain project, the safety benefits of deep geologic disposal, and the importance of the retaining the H Canyon facility at the Department of Energy's Savannah River Site.

In our draft report, the Commission finds that deep geologic disposal is an essential component of a comprehensive nuclear waste management system. Your comments about the suitability of Yucca Mountain to serve as a deep geologic disposal site echo those we have heard from people across the country who believe the United States should not abandon the investment it has made in developing Yucca Mountain as a proposed nuclear waste repository. As we have listened to testimony and public comment, we have been constantly reminded of the serious lack of trust that exists today in the federal government's ability to meet its waste cleanup obligations. The decision to withdraw the license application for the proposed Yucca Mountain repository has only increased this deficit of trust. Unfortunately, the longer our country fails to solve the nuclear waste problem, the greater the trust deficit becomes – with the U.S. government continuing to fail in its legal and moral obligation to take spent nuclear fuel and defense high level waste while the future of nuclear power as an option for electrical generation in this country is seriously jeopardized.

In a February 11, 2011 letter to the Commission, the Secretary of Energy states that “it is time to move beyond the 25 year old stalemate over Yucca Mountain” and “look for a better solution – one that is not only scientifically sound but that can also achieve a greater level of public acceptance than would have been possible at Yucca Mountain.” The Secretary’s view has been supported by many witnesses before our Commission who believe Congress acted unfairly when it decided in 1987 to force the repository project on an unwilling host state.

Feelings certainly run deep on both sides of the Yucca Mountain debate. The Secretary has made it clear that we are not a siting commission. We have been directed not to recommend specific locations for any component or facility of the U.S. nuclear waste management system. We will therefore not issue any findings on the merits of Yucca Mountain or any other site as a repository. Furthermore, we will not defend or oppose the Administration’s actions regarding Yucca Mountain. What we will do is recommend a sound waste management approach that can lead to the resolution of the stalemate regardless of what site or sites are ultimately chosen for permanent disposal of America’s spent nuclear fuel and other high-level nuclear wastes.

We will give your views our fullest consideration as we complete our review and submit our final recommendations to the Secretary of Energy in January of next year. Our Commission will present to the Secretary a set of recommendations that will put the U.S. government on a path to meet its nuclear waste management obligations to the people of South Carolina and the nation.

With best regards,



Lee Hamilton  
Co-Chairman



Brent Scowcroft  
Co-Chairman