

## **DOE files final Yucca dump application; Obama, if elected, could kill project**

**Background:** The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) submitted its final application on June 3, 2008 to license the proposed Yucca Mountain repository for high-level radioactive waste, situated in Nevada, 90 miles from Las Vegas. The dump, if opened, would predominantly house waste from the country's civilian nuclear power plants in addition to some nuclear weapons waste. However, Democratic presidential candidate and now presumed nominee, Barack Obama, has publicly vowed to kill the Yucca dump if elected. Republican presumptive nominee, John McCain, told a Reno, NV audience last week that he supports the Yucca dump and has consistently voted in favor of Yucca. The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission now has three to four years to review the proposal before giving it the final green light.

### **Kevin Kamps, radioactive waste watchdog at Beyond Nuclear, comments:**

"The DOE statement on Tuesday that Yucca Mountain will 'solve' this country's radioactive waste problem is just the latest delusion of a desperate agency that has failed to prove for more than 20 years that the flawed and leaky Yucca Mountain site is feasible. The DOE is already squandering one to two million dollars a day trying to make Yucca a reality. But a more probable – and desirable – outcome is that the Yucca dump will never open. Indeed, it could – and should – be killed swiftly by one stroke of the presidential pen, an outcome that looks likely if Barack Obama wins the November election.

"Radioactive wastes stored at atomic reactors across the country remain vulnerable to catastrophic accidents or attacks. But putting them on our roads, rails and waterways to Yucca Mountain only further risks attack or accident in major population centers whose consequences could be tantamount to a Mobile Chernobyl."

At the very least, we must immediately begin to fortify radioactive waste at the reactor sites. But, most importantly, we must stop making more waste. This is the most obvious first step in attempting to solve our mounting radioactive waste problem and is made more imperative by the fact that the legal capacity at Yucca Mountain could only accommodate the first 63,000 metric tons of commercial irradiated nuclear fuel, a target that will be met by 2010. If nuclear waste continues to be generated, the push will be on to find a second dumpsite, most likely in the eastern half of the U.S. where most of the country's 104 reactors operate. This will simply provoke another protracted and futile political battle and a further needless squandering of billions of taxpayer dollars."