

Beyond Nuclear Action Alert, May 15, 2008

## Help Stop Foreign Nuke Waste Dumping in U.S.!:

**Background:** Should the United States be a dumping ground for other countries' nuclear waste? While the answer would seem obvious to most, EnergySolutions--the largest commercial nuclear waste dump in the U.S.--thinks otherwise. The company has asked the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) for permission to import 20,000 tons of so-called "low-level" nuclear waste from defunct nuclear reactors in Italy. The waste would be shipped through ports in South Carolina and Louisiana, incinerated in Tennessee, and then some of the waste would be sent to EnergySolutions "low-level" nuclear waste dump in Utah for disposal. Besides being the largest proposal of its kind, and the first time a company has specifically asked to dispose large quantities of foreign generated nuclear materials in the U.S., the plan would also set a precedent for the U.S. to become the world's nuclear waste dump. That is why Congressmen Bart Gordon (D-TN), Jim Matheson (D-UT), and Ed Whitfield (R-KY) have introduced bipartisan legislation--[HR 5632](#) --to ban the importation of "low-level" radioactive waste into the United States. Already, the Governors of Utah and Wyoming, a regional oversight committee called the Northwest Interstate Compact, and thousands of citizens have spoken out against EnergySolutions' proposal. It is clear that it was never the intent of state or federal law to allow for the disposal of foreign nuclear waste in the U.S., but EnergySolutions is exposing a loophole that could allow for this to happen and open the door for much more to come. HR 5632 closes this loophole, protects us from the unnecessary risks of importing nuclear waste from around the world, and preserves our ability to handle the uncertainties of our own nuclear waste disposal needs.

**Our View:** HR 5632 is important not only to prevent EnergySolutions from opening the door to foreign nuclear waste disposal in the U.S., but also in recognition of the fact that we cannot even solve our own radioactive waste dilemma in this country. For example, the Barnwell, South Carolina "low" level radioactive waste dumpsite will close its doors (or leaking, unlined ditches, rather) to all states but South Carolina, New Jersey, and Connecticut on July 1, 2008. This means that 39 states will then lack anywhere to dump their Class B and Class C "low" level radioactive wastes, so they will begin piling up at reactor sites. Every single "low" level radioactive waste dump ever opened in the U.S. has leaked into the environment. On-site waste storage at reactors will be vulnerable to accidents, attacks, and leakage. The U.S. nuclear establishment is now pressuring for new dumps, as well as for de-regulation of what they have called "below regulatory concern" radioactive wastes, so they can be dumped in ordinary garbage dumps, or recycled into consumer products. Importing other countries' wastes, when we can't even solve our own problems, makes no sense.

**What You Can Do:** Contact your Congressperson. If they sit on the House Energy and Commerce Committee ( full committee membership viewable at <http://energycommerce.house.gov/membios/110-whoweare.shtml> ), urge them to support HR 5632 and to pass this important legislation out of committee. Even if your U.S. House Member does not sit on that Committee, urge them to contact their colleagues on that Committee on your behalf. You can reach your U.S. Congressperson via the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121. This Committee's "Energy and Air Quality" subcommittee will be

the first to hear this bill next Tuesday, May 20<sup>th</sup>, so your calls before then are important for bolstering support for the bill. (Thanks to HEAL Utah for their help with this alert, and for their vigilant watchdogging of radioactive waste issues in Utah!)