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BIPARTISAN COALITION INTRODUCES HOUSE RESOLUTION OF DISAPPROVAL ON YUCCA DECISION

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – This afternoon, a bi-partisan coalition of Representatives including Jay Inslee (D-WA), Doc Hastings (R-WA), Jim Clyburn (D-SC), Norm Dicks (D-WA), John Spratt Jr. (D-SC), Fred Upton (R-MI), and Gresham Barrett (R-SC) introduced a Resolution of Disapproval to compel the Department of Energy (DOE) to cease its efforts to pull the license application for a nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain. This March the Department of Energy filed a motion with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to withdraw the application, with prejudice, to create a national nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada. The Resolution introduced today is aimed not only at stopping DOE from using appropriated funds to terminate the program, but also ensure the preservation of all scientific and site specific files and data related to Yucca Mountain.

“After decades of scientific studies and billions of dollars spent – Yucca Mountain is the national repository under current law,” said Rep. Hastings. “I have serious concerns about DOE’s decision to ignore current law and move forward with what amounts to a de facto termination of Yucca Mountain even before a decision is made about the license application. This resolution sends a clear message that Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle will continue actively working to keep the Yucca Mountain license moving forward.”

“It is critical here that the DOE follow the will of Congress,” said Rep. Inslee. “Taxpayers have already spent more than \$10 billion on Yucca Mountain, compiling 20 years of data that inform us that this is the best choice to securely store tons of nuclear waste. Keeping waste scattered across the country, or in the case of Washington State at Hanford, is no longer an option. We have a solution to this problem and we must move forward.”

Rep. Dicks said “it would be illogical to remove the option of deep geologic disposal before the Department of Energy offers any alternate plan for high-level waste disposition. This could delay the final removal of Hanford waste for decades, and costs billions of dollars without adding to the safety and security of these materials.”

“I support this resolution, and disagree with the Administration’s decision on Yucca Mountain,” said Rep. Spratt. “Last year I chaired a Budget hearing highlighting the impact and liability should Yucca not be completed. I will do all I can to make sure some funding goes to defend the Yucca Mountain license application this year.”

“I am disappointed with recent actions taken by the DOE to effectively terminate the Yucca Mountain project,” said Rep. Barrett. “On more than one occasion, Congress has affirmed that Yucca Mountain is the nation’s primary permanent nuclear waste storage site. Temporary nuclear waste holding facilities, such as the Savannah River Site in my home state of South Carolina, were never intended to store nuclear waste indefinitely, so it is absolutely necessary that we do everything within our power to ensure that the Yucca Mountain project moves forward and that promises made to our communities and states are fulfilled.”

“It is irresponsible for the Administration to hastily pull the plug on Yucca Mountain without offering a thoughtful alternative, especially after so much planning and billions in taxpayer dollars spent over the last three decades,” said Upton. “And yet, despite the change in policy, ratepayers continue to pay nearly a billion dollars into the trust fund each year and get nothing back in return. As the nation renews its commitment to nuclear power, Yucca Mountain still has the scientific community’s seal of approval and remains the safest, most viable solution to permanently store spent nuclear fuel.”

Congress passed the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982 (NWPA) to centralize the long-term management of nuclear waste, including construction of a safe and permanent nuclear waste repository. In 1987 Congress amended the NWPA by designating Yucca Mountain as the only option for a longer-term storage site by a vote of 237–181 in the House of Representatives and 61–28 in the Senate and reaffirmed Yucca Mountain’s designation as the only option for a long-term storage site in 2002 by a vote of 306–117 in the House of Representatives and 60–39 in the Senate. Then again in 2007, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly rejected, by a vote of 80–351, an attempt to eliminate funding for the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste disposal program.