



United States Department of Energy

## Office of Public Affairs

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### **DOE to Send Proposed Yucca Mountain Legislation to Congress**

**WASHINGTON, DC** – Secretary of Energy Samuel W. Bodman today announced that on Wednesday, April 5, he will send to the U.S. Congress a legislative proposal to enhance the nation's ability to manage and dispose of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste. Submission of this legislation fulfills a commitment contained in President Bush's Fiscal Year 2007 budget.

"We need to ensure a strong and diversified energy mix to fuel our nation's economy, and nuclear power is an important component of that mix," Secretary Bodman said. "In order to expand our nuclear generating capacity, we need a safe, permanent, geologic repository for spent nuclear fuel at Yucca Mountain. This proposed legislation will help provide stability, clarity, and predictability to the Yucca Mountain Project and will help lay a solid foundation for America's future energy security."

The proposed legislation includes a comprehensive set of provisions that will facilitate licensing and construction of the geologic repository and will lead to the safe, permanent disposal of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste deep within the mountain.

Among other things, the proposed legislation would withdraw permanently from public use the land at and surrounding the Yucca Mountain repository site in Nevada, and would facilitate Congress' ability to provide adequate funding for the Yucca Mountain Project. Permanent withdrawal is needed to meet a Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) licensing requirement for the Yucca Mountain repository and will help assure protection of public health and the environment. Funding reform is necessary to correct a technical budgetary problem that has acted as a disincentive to adequate funding.

The proposed bill would also eliminate the current statutory 70,000 metric ton cap on disposal capacity at Yucca Mountain, in order to allow maximum use of the mountain's true technical capacity. This provision would help provide the safe isolation of the nation's entire commercial spent nuclear fuel inventory from existing reactors, including life extensions.

Also included are provisions for a more streamlined NRC licensing process, and for initiation of infrastructure activities, including safety and other upgrades and rail line construction, to enable earlier start-up of operations. Other provisions are designed to consolidate duplicative environmental review.

Currently, more than 50,000 metric tons of spent nuclear fuel are stored at more than 100 above-ground sites in 39 states; and every year, American reactors produce an additional 2,000 metric tons of spent fuel. In 2002, President Bush and Congress decided that Yucca Mountain was the best location for a permanent repository for the disposal of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste. This legislation will aid the federal government in carrying that decision forward, and will help the

government meet its legal obligation to dispose of those materials.

As part of President Bush's Advanced Energy Initiative, the department recently announced the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP), which would recycle spent fuel. GNEP is a comprehensive, global, nuclear energy strategy that will enable the expansion of emissions-free nuclear energy worldwide in a safe, environmentally clean, affordable manner that will minimize waste and reduce the threat of nuclear proliferation. Even with the potential waste minimization benefits of GNEP, the Yucca Mountain repository would still be needed to provide for the safe, permanent geologic disposal of spent nuclear fuel.

**U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Public Affairs, Washington, D.C.**