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Statement by U.S. Rep. Shelley Berkley  
DOE Yucca Mountain Scoping Meeting  
Las Vegas, NV  
November 2, 2006

As Las Vegas' Representative in the United States Congress, I feel that it is my duty to point out the inadequacies of the Energy Department's latest public relations effort on Yucca Mountain. DOE is now proposing to study a new rail corridor that would allow shipments of deadly nuclear garbage to enter Nevada from both the east and the west along the I-80 corridor on its way to the Yucca Mountain nuclear garbage dump, a mere 90 miles from Las Vegas. DOE is also proposing a new design for the facility at Yucca Mountain that will handle the nuclear waste before it is buried underground. In both cases, DOE's apparent goal is to deny Nevadans a meaningful opportunity to review, understand and comment on these new proposals, hoping that these controversial ideas will slip through unnoticed in a few public meetings and with only a two-month comment period.

By proposing a new north-south rail corridor in Western Nevada beginning in Hawthorne, DOE offers further evidence that the entire Yucca Mountain project remains in disarray, more than a decade behind schedule and with costs continuing to spiral out of control. The Mina Rail Corridor is enticing to DOE because it would be shorter and possibly less expensive to build. But the proposal opens a new Pandora's Box of potential problems. It would directly impact more Nevada communities than the Caliente route, and would raise the specter of thousands of tons of nuclear waste being transported along much of the length of Interstate 80 in Northern Nevada and within a few miles of Reno and Carson City.

DOE has scheduled a few "listening sessions" during which interested citizens may voice their opinions on the new proposals. But the notice of these meetings did not even include a map of the Mina route. DOE has also failed to take into account the impact of the proposal on communities located along the existing rail lines that would be used to ship the waste to Yucca Mountain, including Elko, Battle Mountain and Winnemucca in Nevada, as well as Salt Lake City, Utah and Sacramento, California. No public meetings were scheduled in these locations, probably for fear of alerting residents to the possible dangers they face from accidents or terrorist strikes involving the nuclear waste shipments.

The manner in which these issues are being rushed through the process, with only 60 days allowed for public comment, is indicative of the Bush administration's relentless drive to force the nation's nuclear garbage on the people of Nevada. Earlier this year, DOE proposed doubling the amount of waste that can be shipped to Yucca Mountain. And now the administration is trying to keep Nevadans in the dark about the route that these radioactive shipments will take through our state and how it will be handled once it arrives here. After being left to twist in the wind as the government has tried unsuccessfully to make Yucca Mountain a reality, the people of Nevada at the very least deserve a reasonable opportunity to weigh in on the most recent proposals, instead of a few brief meetings and only 60 days to submit comments.

I remain an absolute opponent of the political decision to bury the nation's nuclear garbage in the Nevada desert, and I will continue to fight with every fiber of my being against any attempt to "railroad" the people of Nevada.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shelley Berkley". The signature is fluid and includes a large, decorative flourish at the end.

SHELLEY BERKLEY  
Member of Congress