

# BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON AMERICA'S NUCLEAR FUTURE

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## BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON AMERICA'S NUCLEAR FUTURE ISSUES FINAL REPORT TO SECRETARY OF ENERGY

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future today released its final report to the U.S. Energy Secretary, detailing comprehensive recommendations for creating a safe, long-term solution for managing and disposing of the nation's spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste.

The report is the culmination of nearly two years of work by the commission and its subcommittees, which met more than two dozen times since March 2010, gathering testimony from experts and stakeholders, as well as visiting nuclear waste management facilities both domestic and overseas.

The commission, co-chaired by former Congressman Lee H. Hamilton and former National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, was tasked by Energy Secretary Steven Chu with devising a new strategy for managing the nation's sizable and growing inventory of nuclear waste. Scowcroft and Hamilton said they believe the report's recommendations offer a practical and promising path forward, and cautioned that failing to act to address the issue will be damaging and costly.

"The majority of these recommendations require action to be taken by the Administration and Congress, and offer what we believe is the best chance of success going forward, based on previous nuclear waste management experience in the U.S. and abroad," the Commissioners wrote in a letter to Chu that accompanied the report. "We urge that you promptly designate a senior official with sufficient authority to coordinate all of the DOE elements involved in the implementation of the Commission's recommendations."

The report noted that the Obama Administration's decision to halt work on a repository at Yucca Mountain in Nevada is the latest indicator of a nuclear waste management policy that has been troubled for decades and has now reached an impasse. Allowing that impasse to continue is not an option, the report said.

"The need for a new strategy is urgent, not just to address these damages and costs but because this generation has a fundamental, ethical obligation to avoid burdening future generations with the entire task of finding a safe, permanent solution for managing hazardous nuclear materials they had no part in creating," the Commission wrote in the report's Executive Summary.

The strategy outlined in the Commission report contains three crucial elements. First, the Commission recommends a consent-based approach to siting future nuclear waste storage and disposal facilities, noting that trying to force such facilities on unwilling states, tribes and communities has not worked. Second, the Commission recommends that the responsibility for the nation's nuclear waste management program be transferred to a new organization; one that is independent of the DOE and dedicated solely to assuring the safe storage and ultimate disposal of spent nuclear waste fuel and high-level radioactive waste. Third, the Commission recommends changing the manner in which fees being paid into the Nuclear Waste Fund – about \$750 million a year – are treated in the federal budget to ensure they are being set aside and available for use as Congress initially intended.

The report also recommends immediate efforts to commence development of at least one geologic disposal facility and at least one consolidated storage facility, as well as efforts to prepare for the eventual large-scale transport of spent nuclear fuel and high-level waste from current storage sites to those facilities. The report also recommends the U.S. continue to provide support for nuclear energy innovation and workforce development, as well as strengthening its international leadership role in efforts to address safety, waste management, non-proliferation and security concerns.

The Commission noted that it was specifically not tasked with rendering any opinion on the suitability of Yucca Mountain, proposing any specific site for a waste management facility, or offering any opinion on the role of nuclear power in the nation's energy supply mix.

“These are all important questions that will engage policy makers and the public in the years ahead,” the Commission wrote. “However, none of them alters the urgent need to change and improve our strategy for managing the high-level wastes and spent fuel that already exist and will continue to accumulate so long as nuclear reactors operate in this country.” What the Commission has endeavored to do is recommend a sound waste management approach that can lead to the resolution of the current impasse, and can and should be applied regardless of what site or sites are ultimately chosen to serve as the permanent disposal facility for America's spent nuclear fuel and other high-level nuclear wastes.

The United States currently has more than 65,000 tons of spent nuclear fuel stored at about 75 operating and shutdown reactor sites around the country. More than 2,000 tons are being produced each year. The DOE also is storing an additional 2,500 tons of spent fuel and large volumes of high-level nuclear waste, mostly from past weapons programs, at a handful of government-owned sites.

In addition to co-chairmen Hamilton and Scowcroft, members of the Commission included Mr. Mark H. Ayers, the Hon. Vicky A. Bailey, Dr. Albert Carnesale, Sen. Pete Domenici, Ms. Susan Eisenhower, Sen. Chuck Hagel, Mr. Jonathan Lash, Dr. Allison M. Macfarlane, Dr. Richard A. Meserve, Dr. Ernest J. Moniz, Dr. Per Peterson, Mr. John Rowe, and Rep. Phil Sharp.

The Commission's full report is available at: [www.brc.gov](http://www.brc.gov)

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