

Sandoval letter underscores state's Yucca Mountain opposition to House subcommittee

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CARSON CITY - Gov. Brian Sandoval on Wednesday reiterated Nevada's steadfast opposition to the construction of a nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain ahead of a hearing Thursday on the project in Washington, DC.

"My position, and that of the state of Nevada, remains unchanged from my previous letters to this committee in May 2015, and January 2016: the state of Nevada opposes the project based on scientific, technical and legal merits," Sandoval said in his letter to the House Subcommittee on Environment and the Economy.

"Furthermore, as set forth in the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982, only the governor is empowered to consult on matters related to the siting of a nuclear waste repository," he said.

Subcommittee Chairman John Shimkus, R-Ill., has set the hearing for 7 a.m. Pacific time. Among the witnesses are Reps. Mark Amodei and Crescent Hardy, both R-Nev., and Rep. Dina Titus, D-Nev. Also scheduled to testify is Nye County Commissioner Dan Schinhofen, among others.

In his filed testimony, Schinhofen said he and some other county officials support completing the licensing proceeding for Yucca Mountain, located 100 miles northwest of Las Vegas.

"We want to know, based on a comprehensive review of all the data, by an impartial body, if a repository at Yucca Mountain is safe," he said. "If it is not safe, I will be the first person to oppose the construction of the repository.

"Our opponents claim Yucca Mountain is unsafe," Schinhofen said. "In my mind, that gives them an even greater incentive to have a thorough review."

In his letter, Sandoval said Nevada has not been treated as a partner in the debate on Yucca Mountain, as seen in 1987 when the state was singled out by Congress to house the nation's high-level nuclear waste dump.

Sandoval said Congress should focus its efforts on a bipartisan, long-term solution to the issue through a consent-based process.

While Yucca Mountain has been declared dead many times in the past, the project never goes away completely.

The latest effort to revive it is in legislation in the House that would allot the U.S. Department of Energy \$150 million to continue an application process to license Yucca Mountain as a nuclear storage facility. The Senate version of an appropriations bill contains no such funding, and Sen. Harry Reid of Nevada has repeatedly said the project is dead and will remain so after he leaves office at the end of his term.

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