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## Republicans point to cost of nuclear waste

### Backers still push Yucca Mountain

By KEITH ROGERS  
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Cheaper is better when it comes to shouldering taxpayers with the burden of dealing with the nuclear power industry's mounting piles of highly radioactive waste.

That's the view along party lines when Congress tackles the issue in pending legislation and in a request to the Government Accountability Office.

The difference is how to go about making the task cheaper and whether disposing 77,000 tons of it in Yucca Mountain, 100 miles northwest of Las Vegas, is still an option despite the Obama administration's stance to the contrary.

"The one thing they agree on is the taxpayers are getting ripped off," said David Cherry, a spokesman for Rep. Shelley Berkley, D-Nev.

He was reacting Tuesday to an Oct. 1 request from Yucca Mountain backers Rep. Joe Barton of Texas and Rep. Greg Walden of Oregon, Republican leaders on the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

Barton and Walden say abandoning the Yucca Mountain Project will cost taxpayers to store used reactor fuel temporarily, fight lawsuits from the nuclear power industry and study another disposal site.

They want the GAO to examine what weighed into the Obama administration's decision to deem Yucca Mountain not an option and the taxpayers' liabilities that lie ahead.

"Given that Yucca Mountain's price tag has swollen to \$100 billion, it is laughable that House Republicans are still clinging to this pile of radioactive pork," a statement by Cherry reads.

From Berkley's perspective, Cherry said, "It will cost us far more money to dump nuclear waste in Nevada than to pay every one of these liability claims."

Nevada Agency for Nuclear Projects Director Bruce Breslow said any financial solution will require the government to take ownership and or liability for the waste.

"It doesn't appear the private sector can afford it," he said by telephone Tuesday.

In July, Barton and Rep. Fred Upton, R-Mich., introduced a bill that would authorize the Energy Department's nuclear waste fund to establish contracts with a company to recycle spent fuel from power reactors. The measure has not been scheduled for action by the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

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families," Barton said in a statement touting the bill as step toward reducing the volume of waste that would be destined for a Yucca Mountain repository.

Upton added, "We must restore some sanity to our nation's nuclear policy, especially in light of the administration's foolish diversion from Yucca Mountain."

Cherry said there is "plenty of time to find a real solution to the waste issue" given that it can be stored in dry casks at reactor sites for a century.


Energy Secretary Steven Chu is expected to appoint a commission to examine solutions without Yucca Mountain.

Cherry said the path the nation will take on nuclear waste will be charted in provisions of a climate bill that will take shape in the next few months.

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