

GOVERNMENT

Energy Secretary: Importance of resuming Yucca licensing 'became clearer' after Nevada trip, geologic repository is the 'best long-term

Posted at: <https://thenevadaindependent.com/article/energy-secretary-importance-resuming-yucca-licensing-became-clearer-nevada-trip-geologic-repository-best-long-term-solution-u-s-nuclear-waste>

April 26, 2017

Energy Secretary Rick Perry says the importance of resuming the licensing process for the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository “became clearer” after touring the site last month and that a geologic repository is the “best long-term solution” for the country’s nuclear waste ahead of a congressional hearing on the proposal this morning.

In a letter to Subcommittee on Environment Chairman John Shimkus, R-Ill. And Committee on Energy and Commerce Chairman Greg Walden, R-Ore. Tuesday obtained by *The Nevada Independent*, Perry highlighted the \$120 million President Donald Trump requested in his “America First” budget proposal to restart licensing activities at Yucca and create a “robust interim storage program.” He said that the interim program is a “near term” solution for the country’s spent fuel from reactor sites but that a geologic repository is a solution looking long term.

“We owe the American people a long-term solution for the Nation’s ever growing inventory of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste generated by our Nation’s ever growing inventory of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste generated by our Nation’s commercial nuclear and defense activities that is currently stored at numerous sites across the United States,” Perry wrote in the letters. “I look forward to

working with the Congress on moving forward on both the near- and long-term steps to achieve this progress.”

The environment subcommittee hearing, happening this morning, is reviewing Shimkus’s draft proposal to restart the licensing of the Yucca Mountain site and examining the federal government’s responsibility to dispose of nuclear waste from sites across the country.

Democratic Reps. Ruben Kihuen, Dina Titus and Jacky Rosen and Republican Sen. Dean Heller, were slated to testify during the hearing to express their opposition to reviving the licensing process. Both Heller and Democratic Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto voted to confirm Perry as Energy Secretary during confirmation hearings earlier this year.

Republican Gov. Brian Sandoval, who met with Perry on his trip to Southern Nevada last month to affirm his “unwavering opposition” to the project, is in Washington D.C. this week to meet again with Perry, in addition to Scott Pruitt, administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions.

Sandoval has repeatedly stated his serious concerns with the Yucca Mountain project, sending a letter to Shimkus and ranking member Rep. Paul Tonko, D-NY earlier this week stating his concerns.

“The State of Nevada opposes the project based on scientific, technical and legal merits,” Sandoval said. “Furthermore, as a reminder to your committee members, 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.”

At Sandoval’s direction, Nevada recently took steps to intervene in a Texas lawsuit seeking to force the federal government to restart the Yucca Mountain project.