May 24, 2013: Many organizations signing here have made additional comments to the Committee on this matter; we submit these comments as one voice to emphasize these points.

Comments:
The first objective of any strategy to manage our country’s stockpile of nuclear waste must be safe and secure storage and minimizing the number of times radioactive waste is handled and transported. The proposal to move nuclear waste to one or more consolidated waste storage facilities does not meet this objective. In addition the proposal does not address broader storage and disposal issues. Adopting a plan to move waste around the country without linkage to permanent disposal would be inequitable.

We oppose the inclusion of consolidated “interim” waste storage in the Nuclear Waste Administration Act of 2013.

Transportation risks and hazards are compounded
Consolidation would multiply the distances high-level waste is shipped, and escalate the risks of public and worker exposure and severe accidents (accident rate is directly tied to shipment miles). It would also further stress and potentially damage irradiated nuclear fuel, making future handling, transport, and long term isolation from the environment much more difficult.

Multiple transportation campaigns are more complex than some reports make them out to be:

- the National Academy of Sciences report "Going the Distance," often cited for concluding that transport is "safe," expressly stated that security concerns were significant, but this was not included in the report nor its conclusion;

- many conclusions are based on transport of other nuclear materials, such as nuclear warheads, "low-level" waste and uranium fuel that has not been used in a reactor; none of these materials are comparable in size, thermal mass, ambient gamma dose or attractiveness to would-be terrorists;

- to date, containers for irradiated fuel have never been physically tested--particularly those currently in use at reactor sites--for accident conditions;
• even routine transport will result in ionizing radiation exposure to the general population; the current regulations do not reflect many new findings about radiation impact that underscore, once again, that such exposure must be minimized, not multiplied for corporate convenience.

Transfer of backlog waste to dry containers at the site where it was generated, and storage for the "interim" period at that site, will reduce two enormous risk factors: over-full fuel pools and unnecessary transport of the waste. Security and safety at the existing sites would be greatly increased by the hardening of the dry storage containers. Hardened On-site Storage or HOSS is a set of principles developed by communities currently impacted by on-site waste storage and are posted in complete form here: [http://www.nirs.org/radwaste/policy/hossprinciples3232010.pdf](http://www.nirs.org/radwaste/policy/hossprinciples3232010.pdf)

**Does not resolve existing vulnerability of nuclear waste storage**

Our groups agree that reducing the inventory of irradiated fuel stored in liquid pools at reactor sites must be a top priority. Mandating consolidated storage does not ensure a prompt removal of waste from pools at all sites. If reactor owners are allowed to await the formation of a new federal agency, the production of new containers on a federal schedule, and the arrival of their turn in the traditional waste "queue" or some other new sequence, it could be decades before some older waste is removed from fuel pools.

A bill which mandates hardened dry storage of all waste approved by the regulator for dry storage would accomplish the goal of rapidly reducing fuel pool inventories. In our view, the failure of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to mandate hardened on-site dry storage at reactor sites expressly on the basis of its own assessment of harm that would result from a fuel pool accident or attack should have been corrected through Congressional action long ago; the Fukushima Daiichi events merely underscore this.ii

**Consolidated storage sites could become de facto permanent**

The primary purpose of moving the waste to a temporary site is to satisfy the grave legislative blunder ratified by the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982: that the federal government not only would take possession of commercial nuclear waste, but that it would begin accepting waste for disposal in 1998.

Because the federal government is 15 years late taking ownership of the waste, it is pushing a strategy that prioritizes the resolution of financial liabilities rather than ensuring safety and security. Moving irradiated nuclear fuel and other high level wastes to a consolidated site could de-incentivize and adversely impact progress of the nation’s efforts toward a viable permanent solution. The draft legislation’s
overtures toward decoupling the relationship between storage and permanent disposal further exacerbate this issue.

Our view is simple: there must be no transportation of spent nuclear fuel or high level waste until it is heading to a permanent site. The discussion of consolidated storage without the linkage provided in the existing Nuclear Waste Policy Act is not credible as "temporary" and the provisions offered by the Committee do not rise to the level of that term.

**Does not reduce the number of contaminated sites**
True consolidation of waste is not possible as long as nuclear utilities continue to generate waste. As long as nuclear power plants continue to operate, nuclear waste will be at reactors, as the waste must be cooled in pools on-site at least five years before being moved to either on-site dry storage or an off-site storage facility. This fact, combined with the decades it would take to establish any new site, and decades to ship the existing backlog of waste is a key reason that dry storage on-site should be put in HOSS (hardened on-site storage) now, no matter what.

In fact, the 1996 report by the Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board entitled “Disposal and Storage of Spent Nuclear Fuel -- Finding the Right Balance” stated that the most geographically equitable approach to storage is to leave the spent fuel at reactors near the communities that have benefited from the power generated.

**Consolidating the storage of irradiated fuel is integral to reprocessing**
Consolidation would increase the probability of reprocessing, resulting in massive separation of plutonium with no way to ensure that it would not be diverted, officially or unofficially, for use in weapons of mass destruction. Our groups strongly oppose reprocessing. It is expensive and polluting, and weakens the global non-proliferation regime. It is not a viable waste management strategy, as reflected in the Blue Ribbon Commission report, because it does not significantly reduce the radioactivity of the waste that must be stored in a repository. In fact, there has been no resolution for the millions of gallons of toxic waste generated by spent fuel reprocessed in the United States decades ago.

**Does not honor the “polluter pay” principles established in the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982**
Exemption of waste generators from continued financial participation in responsibility for any waste generated prior to its emplacement in a bona fide location for permanent isolation from our environment is a striking change from the existing statute and should be addressed directly in this legislation. There are a number of options and our groups would, in general, support a funding equation that mandates transfer from pools to hardened on-site storage rapidly. However, there remains an
issue as to whether and to what extent waste generators should have a financial role in expediting a safer waste management regime.

Sincerely,

Michael Mariotte
Executive Director
Nuclear Information and Resource Service
Takoma Park, MD

Allison Fisher
Public Citizen
Washington, DC

John Coequyt
Sierra Club
Washington, DC

Lynn Thorp
Clean Water Action
Washington, DC

Jim Riccio
Greenpeace
Washington, DC

Catherine Thomasson, MD
Executive Director
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Washington, DC

Kevin Kamps
Beyond Nuclear
Takoma Park, MD

Ken Bossong
Executive Director
SUN DAY Campaign
Takoma Park, MD

Stephen Brittle
Don’t Waste Arizona
Phoenix, AZ

Jack & Felice Cohen-Joppa, editors
The Nuclear Resister
Tucson, AZ

Russell Lowes
www.SafeEnergyAnalyst.org
Tucson, AZ

Jane Swanson
San Luis Obispo Mothers for Peace
San Luis Obispo, CA

Gary Headrick
San Clemente Green
San Clemente, CA

Linda Seeley
Terra Foundation
San Luis Obispo, CA

Robert M. Gould, MD
President
San Francisco-Bay Area Chapter
Physicians for Social Responsibility
San Francisco, CA

Lillian Light
President
Environmental Priorities Network
Manhattan Beach, CA

Enid Schreibman
Center For Safe Energy
Berkeley, CA

Marylia Kelley
Executive Director,
Tri-Valley CAREs
Livermore, CA
Barbara George
Women's Energy Matters
Berkeley, CA

Andrew Christie
Santa Lucia Sierra Club
San Luis Obispo, CA

Libbe HaLevy
Nuclear Hotseat Podcast
Los Angeles, CA

Carol Jahnkow
Director Emerita/Special Projects Coordinator
Peace Resource Center of San Diego
San Diego, CA

Martha Sullivan, Organizer
Coalition to Decommission San Onofre
San Diego, CA

Aletha, Co-Founder
Free Soil Party USA
Los Angeles, CA

Pam Nelson
Sierra Club, Santa Margarita Group
Temecula, CA

Donna Charpied
Executive Director
Desert Protection Society
Desert Center, CA

Carolyn S. Scarr
Program Coordinator
Ecumenical Peace Institute/CALC
Berkeley, CA

Cara L. Campbell
Ecology Party of Florida
Ft. Lauderdale, FL
Nancy O'Byrne  
Coordinator  
Pax Christi Florida  
St. Augustine, FL

Steve Showen  
Co-Chair  
Green Party of Florida

Michael Canney  
Co-chair  
Alachua County Green Party (FL)

Lynn Ringenberg, M.D.  
President, Physicians for Social Responsibility/Florida  
Professor emeritus USF College of Medicine  
Tampa, FL

Glenn Carroll  
Nuclear Watch South  
Atlanta, GA

Becky Rafter  
Executive Director  
Georgia Women's Action for New Directions  
Atlanta, GA

Mike Carberry  
Green State Solutions  
Iowa City, IA

Dave Kraft  
Executive Director  
Nuclear Energy Information Service  
Chicago, IL

Maureen Headington, President  
Stand Up/Save Lives Campaign  
Burr Ridge, IL

Kerwin Olson
Executive Director
Citizens Action Coalition of Indiana
Indianapolis, IN

Kamala Platt
Meadowlark Center
Newton, KS

Bruce K. Gagnon
Coordinator
Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space
Brunswick, ME

Gwen DuBois
Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility
Baltimore, MD

Patricia Birnie
Chair
GE Stockholders' Alliance
Sandy Spring, MD

Deb Katz
Citizens Awareness Network
Shelburne Falls, MA

Mary Lampert, Director
Pilgrim Watch
Duxbury, MA

Kathryn Barnes
Don't Waste Michigan
Sherwood, MI

Michael J. Keegan
Coalition for a Nuclear Free Great Lakes
Monroe, MI

Laura Dewey
Coordinator
Detroit Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom
Detroit, MI
Alice Hirt  
Don't Waste Michigan  
Holland, MI

Lea Foushee  
George Crocker  
North American Water Office  
Lake Elmo, MN

Gladys Schmitz, SSND  
Mankato Area Environmentalists  
Mankato, MN

Mark Haim, Chair  
Missourians for Safe Energy  
Columbia, MO

Ed Smith  
Safe Energy Director  
Missouri Coalition for the Environment  
St. Louis, MO

Joan Brannigan  
President  
St. Louis Branch of Women's International League for Peace & Freedom  
St. Louis, MO

Buffalo Bruce,  
Staff Ecologist  
Western Nebraska Resources Council  
Chadron, NE

Judy Treichel  
Nevada Nuclear Waste Task Force  
Las Vegas, NV

Jim Haber  
Coordinator  
Nevada Desert Experience  
Las Vegas, NV
Doug Bogen
Executive Director
Seacoast Anti-Pollution League
Exeter, NH

Paula Gotsch
GRAMMES
Normandy Beach, NJ

Joni Arends
Executive Director
Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety
Santa Fe, NM

Sister Rose Marie Cecchini, MM
Office of Life, Peace, Justice & Creation Stewardship
Catholic Charities of Gallup Diocese
Gallup, NM

Barbara Warren,
Executive Director
Citizens' Environmental Coalition
Albany, NY

Manna Jo Greene
Environmental Director
Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Inc.
Beacon, NY

Priscilla Star
Executive Director
Coalition Against Nukes
Montauk, NY

Louis A. Zeller
Executive Director
Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League
Glendale Springs, NC

Hope Taylor, MSPH
Executive Director for Clean Water for North Carolina
Asheville, NC
Julius Kerr  
Neighborhood Environment Watch (NEW)  
NC Chapter of Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL)  
Graham, NC

Mary Olson  
NIRS Southeast  
Asheville, NC

Terry Clark, M.D.  
Chairperson,  
Western North Carolina Chapter  
Physicians for Social Responsibility  
Asheville, NC

Ellen Thomas  
Proposition One Campaign  
Tryon, NC

Christine Borello, President  
Concerned Citizens of Lake Twp./Uniontown IEL Superfund Site, Ohio  
Uniontown, OH

Jessie Pauline Collins  
Citizens Resistance at Fermi 2  
Gore, OK

Barbara Geary  
Chair  
Citizens Action for Safe Energy  
Tulsa, OK

Marilyn McCulloch  
The Carrie Dickerson Foundation  
Tulsa, OK

Nina Bell, J.D.  
Executive Director  
Northwest Environmental Advocates  
Portland, OR
Charles K. Johnson
Director, Joint Task Force on Nuclear Power
Oregon and Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility
Portland, OR and Seattle, WA

Jill Mackie
Women's International League for Peace & Freedom
Ashland, Oregon Branch
Ashland, OR

Katharine Dodge
Education Chair
Northeast Pa. Audubon Society
Honesdale, PA

Ernest Fuller
Concerned Citizens for SNEC Safety
Six Mile Run, PA

Eric Epstein
Three Mile Island Alert
Harrisburg, PA

Liberty Goodwin
Toxics Information Project (TIP)
Providence, RI

Finian Taylor
Hilton Head for Peace
Hilton Head, SC

Cynthia Weehler
Energía Mía
San Antonio, TX

Karen Hadden
Sustainable Energy & Economic Development (SEED) Coalition
Austin, TX

Tom "Smitty" Smith
Public Citizen
Austin, TX
Robert Singleton  
Citizens Organized to Defend Austin  
Austin, TX

Jerry Stein  
Coordinator  
The Peace Farm  
Amarillo, TX

Susan Dancer  
South Texas Association for Responsible Energy  
Blessing, TX

Matagorda County Coalition for Nuclear Industry Accountability  
Bay City, TX

Chris Masey  
Director  
Austin Physicians for Social Responsibility  
Austin, TX

Matt Pacenza  
Policy Director  
HEAL Utah  
Salt Lake City, UT

Scott Sklar  
The Stella Group, Ltd.  
Arlington, VA

Edward “Ned” Childs  
New England Coalition on Nuclear Pollution  
Brattleboro, VT

Chris Williams  
Vermont Citizens Action Network  
Hancock, VT

Jennifer Olaranna Viereck  
HOME: Healing Ourselves & Mother Earth  
N. Bennington, VT
Tom Carpenter  
Executive Director  
Hanford Challenge  
Seattle, WA

Gerry Pollet, JD  
Executive Director,  
Heart of America Northwest  
Seattle, WA

Steven G. Gilbert, PhD, DABT  
INND (Institute of Neurotoxicology & Neurological Disorders)  
Seattle, WA

Pam Kleiss  
Executive Director  
Physicians for Social Responsibility Wisconsin  
Madison, WI

Bonnie Urfer and John LaForge  
Co-directors  
Nukewatch  
Luck, WI

Marcia Halligan  
Kickapoo Peace Circle  
Viroqua, WI

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i See NUREG-1738, *Technical Study of Spent Fuel Pool Accident Risk at Decommissioning Nuclear Power Plants 2001*, and also analysis done by NRC staff and published in the *Federal Register* as a proposed rulemaking on October 30, 1997; FRVol62#210, pages 58690-58694.