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ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS, 5,000+ PEOPLE TELL SECRETARY CHU:

REJECT THE BRC REPORT--DO NOT USE CLOSED REACTORS AS EXCUSE TO CREATE TEMPORARY STORAGE SITE AND INITIATE MASS TRANSPORTATION OF RADIOACTIVE WASTE ACROSS THE U.S.

January 25, 2012, Washington, DC-- Today 88 national, regional and local environmental organizations, and more than 5,400 individuals, sent a letter to Energy Secretary Steven Chu urging him to reject the upcoming recommendation from the Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future (BRC) that would encourage establishment of an "interim" radioactive waste storage dump and begin the transportation of high-level radioactive waste across the U.S.

The letter was initiated by organizations representing communities around permanently closed reactor sites. The Commission's draft report cites these closed reactors, which are still storing their waste on their sites, as the reason that an "interim" storage site should be established immediately.

As the letter states, such a program runs exactly counter to the interests of these communities, "The Commission you appointed is claiming that it is acting in the interest of communities such as ours where closed nuclear power reactors are located, when in fact the Commission's recommendations are in opposition to our number one priority: isolation of radioactivity from our environment for as long as it is a hazard. Centralizing waste storage for purposes of expanded waste production or for reprocessing is contrary to this goal, and is not responsible policy."

"Since Secretary Chu appointed the Blue Ribbon Commission in 2010, concerned citizens living in communities impacted by radioactive waste from across the United States have participated in the BRC meetings, sent comments, and supported experts to participate," said Mary Olson of the Radioactive Waste Project of Nuclear Information and Resource Service. "Our voices have been

heard, but disregarded. This comes as no surprise since a majority of the Commissioners are individuals who have made, or supported the making of, the radioactive waste in question over the course of their careers. Of course they want to move it--they want to make more."

The Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future does include several members who are not directly tied to the nuclear industry, but a controlling share of the seats are held by individuals who, at one time or another, have had primary decision-making authority, or who have personally profited from commercial nuclear technology.

The Commission's final recommendations are due out by the end of this month. In broad brush, and likely to be little changed from the draft report released in June of 2011, these include centralization of irradiated fuel (the most concentrated and immediately lethal material in the nuclear inventory) to one or more central storage locations (that it asserts would be "temporary") entailing the shipment of this deadly waste by barge, truck and train on primary commerce routes.

Congressional efforts in the 1990s to force establishment of an "interim" radioactive waste storage site and begin a national waste transportation program led to widespread public concern about a "Mobile Chernobyl." President Clinton ultimately vetoed such legislation.

The groups urged Secretary Chu to "apply the logic that is missing" from the BRC report and prevent the transportation of radioactive waste "until a permanent isolation program is available." The groups also urged the implementation of Hardened On-Site storage of the waste at the reactor sites, as described in a document called *Principles for Safeguarding Nuclear Waste at Reactor Sites*, which has been endorsed by more than 170 organizations. That document is available at: <http://www.nirs.org/radwaste/policy/hossprinciples3232010.pdf>

The January 25, 2012 letter to Secretary Chu is available here: <http://www.nirs.org/radwaste/policy/chuwasteletter01242012.pdf>