

34 GROUPS URGE NRC TO POSTPONE KEY VOTES IN ORDER TO AVOID “TAINT” OF MAGWOOD CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Latest Step Follows Announced August 31st Departure of “Fatally Compromised” Magwood on Heels of June and July Letters Urging Him to Step Down for Violations of Ethics Laws in Seeking and Landing a Job Promoting Nuclear Energy.

WASHINGTON, D.C. – August 21, 2014 – Nearly three dozen groups and individuals – including leading national and regional organizations Friends of the Earth, Physicians for Social Responsibility, the Sierra Club Nuclear Free Campaign, and the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy – are urging Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) Chairman Allison Macfarlane to postpone two major votes on nuclear waste storage and reactor licensing until after the announced August 31, 2014 departure of embattled NRC Commissioner William D. Magwood.

In their joint letter available online at <http://tinyurl.com/magwoodconflict>, the groups said the step is necessary to “alleviate the taint on the integrity of the NRC’s decision-making process created by Mr. Magwood’s continued participation in NRC safety and environmental decisions.” The two NRC votes tentatively set for August 26th have to do with whether or not to approve a new agency rule and environmental study regarding the effects of long-term spent nuclear reactor fuel storage and whether or not to lift the stay of reactor licensing that the Commission imposed on itself in 2013, after the U.S. Court of Appeals threw out a prior rule.

According to the nearly three dozen groups, Magwood fatally compromised his role as an independent regulator by failing to recuse himself from NRC safety decisions while negotiating for and then accepting the position of Director-General with the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development’s Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA). Under its charter, the NEA actively promotes the use of nuclear energy and the economic interests of its member governments, including governments that own or sponsor U.S. nuclear licensees and applicants.

Today’s letter from the groups states: “If Mr. Magwood is permitted to participate in the upcoming vote, state and local governments and members of the public – who must live with the effects of the NRC’s decisions – will have legitimate grounds to question whether Mr. Magwood unduly influenced the agency to gloss over the serious problems that attend the long-term storage and disposal of spent reactor fuel, in order to fulfill his new mission of promoting nuclear energy worldwide. Despite his glaring conflict of interest, Mr. Magwood has refused our request that he recuse himself from NRC decisions relating to safety and protection of the environment. Therefore it falls to you, the other members of the Commission, to protect the integrity and credibility of your decision-making process by postponing this very important affirmation session until after Mr. Magwood’s departure. Accordingly, we request you to postpone your affirmation session until after Mr. Magwood has left the agency.”

This is not the first time that the embattled Magwood has faced heat for his conflicts of interest.

On July 21st, the 34 groups asked President Barack Obama to request the resignation of Commissioner Magwood for federal ethics violations and conflicts of interest tied to Magwood’s campaigning for and being named to an international job promoting the interests of the nuclear

power industry. On the same date, the 34 groups also sent a separate letter to the NRC Office of Inspector General (OIG) urging an investigation of Magwood that could lead to a referral to the U.S. Department of Justice for prosecution. Earlier, the groups sent a letter on June 18, 2014 asking Magwood to voluntarily step down and recuse himself from all NRC votes on reactor safety issues. Magwood refused to remove himself from rulings involving conflicts of interest but only announced his departure date in the wake of the release of the July 21st letters to President Obama and the NRDC OIG.

The July 21st letter to President Obama is available online at <http://www.nirs.org/reactorwatch/licensing/obamamagwoodletter72114.pdf>. The letter of the same date to the NRC OIG is available online at <http://www.nirs.org/reactorwatch/licensing/magwoodbellletter72114.pdf>. For the full text of the June 18th letter to Magwood urging his immediate resignation, see <http://www.nirs.org/reactorwatch/licensing/magwoodletter61814.pdf>.

The full list of signers of the letters to President Obama and the NRC Inspector General is (in alphabetical order): Alliance to Halt Fermi 3, Beyond Nuclear, Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, Center for a Sustainable Coast, Citizens Allied for Safe Energy, Citizens Environmental Coalition, Citizens Resistance at Fermi 2, Coalition for a Nuclear Free Great Lakes, Don't Waste Michigan, Kay Drey, Ecology Party of Florida, Friends of the Coast, Friends of the Earth, Green States Solutions, Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Indian Point Safe Energy Coalition, Captain Dan Kipnis, Missouri Coalition for the Environment, NC WARN, Nevada Nuclear Waste Task Force, New England Coalition, Northwest Environmental Advocates, Nuclear Energy Information Service, Nuclear Information and Resource Service, Nuclear Watch South, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Public Health and Sustainable Energy, Riverkeeper, San Clemente Green, San Luis Obispo Mothers for Peace, San Onofre Safety, SEED Coalition, Sierra Club Nuclear Free Campaign, and Southern Alliance for Clean Energy.

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