

Good Morning.

I am David Jameson. I am President and CEO of the Greater Aiken, South Carolina, Chamber of Commerce. I am here today in my capacity as current Chairman of the SRS Community Reuse Organization.

The SRSCRO is a non-profit regional group supporting economic diversification and job creation in a five-county in Georgia and South Carolina near the Department of Energy's Savannah River Site.

We are unique among DOE communities in that our area of interest covers two states.

I want to begin today by reiterating our region's continuing belief that the Administration's decision to halt work on Yucca Mountain is wrong headed and counter to the Nation's long-term best interests.

Our objection to the Administration's Yucca Mountain policy is well-known and highlighted by actions taken by our organization.

- We produced a widely-distributed community white paper designed to facilitate discussion and a regional and national consensus on safe, permanent nuclear waste disposal.
- We gathered resolutions from 22 governmental bodies and economic development groups in our region supporting continuation of the Yucca Mountain project.
- We held a well-covered press conference at the National Press Club in Washington to amplify our objections to the Administration's decision.

- We co-sponsored print ads as part of a national campaign to ask our elected officials and candidates where they stand on Yucca Mountain.
- We appeared before this Commission and communicated our views to you in writing and orally at your public hearing in Augusta, Georgia, earlier this year.
- We communicate frequently with our state and Federal elected officials concerning our views and concerns.
- Most recently, we joined with 25 other organizations across the country in signing a letter to the U.S. Senate supporting funding resumption of the NRC's review of the Yucca Mountain license application.

In short, we have mounted an extremely proactive community response in an effort to force reconsideration of the government's ill-advised decision to halt work on Yucca Mountain.

We continue to urge DOE to reconsider its position and allow science and engineering – not politics -- to establish the most appropriate means for disposal of high-level defense nuclear waste.

And we applaud Congressional efforts to restart the Yucca Mountain program. These efforts should continue until they are successful. We continue to believe Yucca Mountain was – and is – the right answer for permanent nuclear waste disposal, and its completion should be pursued vigorously, especially for high-level defense waste.

On this point, we want to be extremely clear. In its final report, the Blue Ribbon Commission needs to de-couple high-level defense waste -- including the vitrified waste and used nuclear fuel from foreign and domestic research reactors -- from commercial spent fuel. Specific recommendations are needed for disposition of these types of high-level defense waste.

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Secondly, as the nation grapples with finding a solution for long-term waste management, we believe DOE's decision to place H Canyon at the Savannah River Site in modified operational status is short-sighted, especially at a time when critical existing mission needs are unmet.

H Canyon – as you know – is a one-of-a-kind facility of immense importance to DOE and the Nation.

It is the only DOE facility that can stabilize and separate DOE's inventory of complex plutonium materials into a form suitable for disposition.

It is the only facility that can prepare the large and growing inventory of research reactor fuel at the Savannah River Site for disposition ... while recovering valuable highly enriched uranium.

It is the only facility that can support engineering development and “hot” testing of alternate nuclear fuel cycles and advanced Small Nuclear Reactors.

The R&D missions I have outlined are fully compatible with this Commission's recommendation calling for stable, long-term support for R&D on advanced reactor and fuel cycle technologies.

We fear DOE's decision to place H Canyon in a modified operational mode puts this valuable resource on a slippery slope toward permanent shutdown – denying the Nation an essential element in the national effort to regain leadership in global nuclear energy technology.

In our view, it is imperative to reinstate H Canyon to operational status – fully funded and fully staffed.

Clearly, H Canyon can play a vital role in helping DOE meet its nuclear waste disposition commitments in a timely manner. As a community, we are on record multiple times with our strongly held concerns about high-level defense waste continuing to be stored at the Savannah River Site with no disposition path available.

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Finally, let me address briefly the Commission's recommendation that we develop one or more interim storage facilities as quickly as possible.

While we appreciate the need for such storage, our concern centers on the term "interim." When it comes to nuclear waste, this is a relative term that is almost never associated with a fixed time frame.

Rather, it can mean anything -- from ten years to 500 years or more. "Interim" needs to be clearly and legally defined before communities such as ours can begin to address the potential and advisability of such storage.

In any event, our community will not support any interim storage scenario unless a permanent solution is pursued at the same time.

This means progress toward a permanent repository and/or a program to reprocess or recycle used nuclear fuel.

Community support of interim storage at Savannah River would also be contingent upon a negotiated package of economic incentives similar to those the Federal Nuclear Waste Negotiator was prepared to offer in his unsuccessful quest for an interim storage site in the 1980s.

It would also require removal of a sufficient quantity of waste currently stored at SRS to maintain an acceptable ceiling on on-site radiation levels.

These two conditions – along with ongoing health and safety monitoring ... proper oversight ... and a legally binding commitment to a final disposition plan – are essential to community support for an interim storage option at SRS.

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As we point out in our Yucca Mountain white paper, the challenge of properly disposing of nuclear waste touches every man, woman and child in America.

It speaks to public safety...to energy independence...to technology and innovation ... to global competitiveness and economic leadership ... and to the political will to do what is right – what must be done for the good of our communities today and of future generations tomorrow.

I thank this Commission for its service and contribution to the national dialog. I urge you to carefully consider our comments and incorporate our views into your final report.

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