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Press Conference Livestreamed at www.facebook.com/publiccitizentx

NO CONSENT: Texans reject high-level radioactive waste

Austin, TX – At a press conference, Texans opposed to the licensing of deadly nuclear reactor waste storage in Texas, had a clear message, “We Do NOT Consent.” Opposition to a dangerous nuclear waste proposal continues to grow at the local, city, county, and state levels. Texas Legislators and Congress members are speaking out and writing to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). School districts, the Midland Chamber of Commerce and group of oil and gas companies are raising their voices. The Governors of Texas and New Mexico oppose Consolidated Interim storage proposals for both states.

In June 2019, Governor Abbott tweeted “Some people want to make Texas the radioactive waste dumping ground of America. I won’t let that happen.”

“We call on Governor Abbott to stand by his fighting words and protect Texas,” said Karen Hadden, Executive Director of SEED Coalition. “Our attorney general should file a legal challenge to the Consolidated Interim Storage license that could be approved by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission as early as September 13, 2021.

A related bill, HB7, may be heard on the House floor as early as Friday. The bill is supposed to prevent TCEQ from issuing a “construction or operating permit for a facility licensed by the NRC to store high-level radioactive waste” and limits transportation of high-level radioactive waste. However, it contains with semantic problems that legal loopholes.

“We support the basic concept of the bill, but it has problems that must be resolved, said Tom “Smitty” Smith, former director of Public Citizen’s Texas Office. “We’re in negotiations with the sponsor.”

“With or without HB 7, Governor Abbott has overwhelming support for taking the legal action necessary to protect Texas,” said Hadden. “There’s opposition from the local community, Permian Basin oil and ranch companies, and cities and counties representing 5.4 million Texans, school districts, the Midland Chamber of Commerce, Texas Legislators and Congressmembers. Over 47,000 comments opposed the NRC’s licensing plan. He has bipartisan support. So, what is the Governor waiting for?”

Governor Abbot wrote to NRC and the DOE on November 3, 2020, saying…

“As Governor of Texas, I strongly oppose ISP’s application for a license to construct and operate a consolidated interim storage facility in Andrews County, Texas. Having consulted with numerous state agencies, including the Texas Department of Public Safety, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, and the Texas Department of Transportation, I urge the NRC to deny ISP’s license application.”
“This deadly radioactive waste — up to 40,000 metric tons of uranium — would sit right on the surface of the facility in dry cask storage systems. Spent nuclear fuel is so dangerous that it belongs in a deep geologic repository, not on a concrete pad above ground in Andrews County...This location could not be worse for storing ultra-hazardous radioactive waste.”

“The proposed ISP facility imperils America’s energy security because it would be a prime target for attacks by terrorists, saboteurs, and other enemies...Such an attack would be uniquely catastrophic because, on top of the tragic loss of human life, it would disrupt the country’s energy supply by shutting down the world’s largest producing oilfield. The Permian Basin is already a target for America’s enemies, and granting ISP’s license application would paint an even bigger bullseye.”

**Sixty-three Texas Legislators** wrote to the NRC on July 23rd, asking that Consolidated Interim Storage licenses for Texas and New Mexico be denied. The letter was also sent to Jennifer Granholm, Secretary of the Department of Energy, which is updating “consent-based siting” criteria. There was a clear message of “NO Consent from Texas.”

**Cities, Counties and School Districts**

Resolutions opposing the dangerous project have been passed by cities and counties representing 5.4 million Texans. They include Dallas, Bexar, El Paso, Midland and Nueces counties and the cities of Midland, San Antonio and Denton. The Fort Worth and Keller Independent School Districts wrote to the NRC about their concerns as well.

**Andrews County** is the site of the existing WCS low-level radioactive waste site, and the county targeted for high-level radioactive waste. On July 30, Andrews County Commissioners reversed a previous stance by signing a resolution that solidly opposes Consolidated Interim Storage. Over 600 people signed a petition on the ProtecttheBasin.org website calling for a halt to licensing of the dangerous radioactive waste facility.

**Legal action is underway**, but court DC Circuit Court of Appeals hearings will come after the NRC licensing decision. SEED Coalition, Sierra Club, Beyond Nuclear, Leona Morgan, Fasken Oil and a coalition of oil royalty owners are parties in the cases.

Opponents will continue to fight high-level radioactive waste storage in Texas and New Mexico, even the NRC issues licenses. Licensed facilities don’t always end up operating. For example, Private Fuel Storage was licensed to operate a high-level radioactive waste facility in Utah, but the facility was never constructed. Two additional nuclear reactors for South Texas Project were licensed but were never built.

“People in Texas do NOT consent to deadly radioactive waste dumping. We hope Governor Abbott will stand by his words and take action to protect the lives of our children and grandchildren,” said Hadden.

Speakers at the No Consent to Radioactive Waste press conference outside the Texas State Capitol included State Representative Vikki Goodwin, District 47, Vanesa Batts, representing the office of Congressman Lloyd Doggett, Cyrus Reed, Conservation Director for Sierra Club’s Lone Star Chapter, Karen Hadden, Executive Director of SEED Coalition and Tom “Smitty” Smith, former director of Public Citizen’s Texas Office.

A full-scale model of one transport cask for high-level radioactive waste transport was provided as a visual. It measures 14 ft. long and 8 feet in diameter. Fully loaded rail packages could weigh
180 tons. While it would not in bomb grade form, a single rail car could carry as much plutonium as was in the bomb dropped on Nagasaki.

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