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To members of the Blue Ribbon Commission:

South Carolina has a long history of contributing to our national security and making sacrifices for our country. Central to this legacy has been Savannah River Site and we are grateful for the contributions of SRS – and the people who work there – to our national defense.

However, South Carolina has also shouldered a disproportionate share of our country's nuclear waste. This sacrifice has come at a high cost for the social and economic wellbeing of our people. As the Department of Energy itself has stated, the 36 million gallons of high-level nuclear waste at SRS constitute South Carolina's gravest environmental threat.

As the Blue Ribbon Commission deliberates on where to move the high-level spent fuel accumulating at nuclear plants, please consider that South Carolina's conservation community has grave concerns about any proposals that would bring more nuclear waste to our state. **The 17 organizations listed at the end of this letter would like to state for the record that we oppose importing waste under any conditions, including under the pretext of centralized "interim" storage and/or reprocessing proposals. Rather, we support storage of the waste at the site of the reactors in the more robust dry cask storage method, Hardened On Site Storage (HOSS), where it can safely remain until the permanent geologic repositories are ready.**

Having waste in multiple states in multiple congressional districts diminishes the possibility of the one location "out of sight, out of mind" syndrome that is likely if the waste is only in one or two states, whose political status may make it the victim of Department of Energy mismanagement, broken deals or funding issues. And raiding the Nuclear Waste Fund to create centralized interim storage may not leave enough money to locate and build permanent geologic repositories, which take many years, and billions of dollars.

Our state's experience with nuclear waste at the Barnwell low-level storage facility nearby provides an instructive lesson in the pitfalls of importing nuclear waste to South Carolina. After nearly two decades of negotiations, South Carolina finally began closing the door in 2000 as our nation's low-level nuclear waste repository. The Atlantic Compact of 2000 finally recognized that all states have a responsibility in dealing with the dangerous wastes associated with nuclear energy. At the heart of this struggle was the recognition that other states would only move forward with their own storage plans once it was clear that our state would no longer shoulder the nation's burden. In the years since, South Carolinians have only solidified their opposition to bringing nuclear waste to our state, as shown in 2007 when the Legislature firmly rejected efforts to break the Atlantic Compact.

Our country stands at a nuclear waste crossroads. Leaving aside the environmental and scientific suitability or unsuitability of Yucca Mountain, both its selection and its apparent failure were essentially political in nature. Rather than pointing fingers over Yucca's demise, elected leaders at every level need to return to the table and hold an intellectually honest discussion to find a solution to our nuclear waste challenge. The recommendation of centralized "interim" storage only substitutes a long-term national solution with a short-term South Carolina problem. South Carolina has shouldered more than its fair share of the country's nuclear waste burden, and HOSS is the most logical short-term answer, while the decision-making process continues to reach a long term solution, determined by policy, not politics, and by science, not special interests.

Ann Timberlake
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Conservation Voters of South Carolina

Audubon South Carolina

Catawba Riverkeeper

Coastal Conservation League

Kitchen Table Climate Study Group

League of Women Voters of South Carolina

Santee Riverkeeper Alliance

Solar Business Alliance

South Carolina Environmental Law Project

South Carolina Native Plant Society

South Carolina Sierra Club

South Carolina Wildlife Federation

Southern Alliance for Clean Energy

Southern Environmental Law Center

Sustainable Midlands

Upstate Forever