



V S C

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South Carolina has a proud tradition of contributing to our national security and making sacrifices for our country. Central to this legacy has been Savannah River Site and Conservation Voters is 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 how to manage the high-level nuclear waste 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. Conservation Voters of South Carolina, along with Audubon South Carolina, Coastal Conservation League, Upstate Forever, South Carolina Sierra Club, South Carolina Wildlife Federation, Environmental Education Association of South Carolina, Solar Business Alliance, Morning Sun Foundation, League of Women Voters of South Carolina, Waccamaw Riverkeeper and Wildlife Action would like to state for the record that we oppose importing waste under any conditions, including under the pretext of "interim" spent fuel storage and/or reprocessing proposals.

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 2007, South Carolina firmly rejected efforts to break the Atlantic Compact. Reflecting the sentiment of South Carolina citizens, the State House Agricultural and Natural Resources Committee voted unanimously to reject efforts to reopen the Barnwell facility to nuclear waste from states outside of the Atlantic Compact.

In the years since, South Carolinians have only solidified their opposition to bringing nuclear waste to our state. We are particularly concerned by efforts to promote SRS as a "bridge" or "interim" site for commercial nuclear waste storage and/or a potential location for reprocessing, including the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership. As with efforts to undo the Atlantic Compact, these proposals substitute a long-term national solution with a short-term South Carolina problem.

First, as clearly evidenced by the current situation at SRS, reprocessing creates untenable on-site storage challenges for high-level nuclear waste. Of the 49 storage tanks, 12 have a history of leaks. Others here today have enumerated how particularly ill-suited are the geologic features of the Savannah River Site, including its high water table, permeable surfaces, wetlands, streams, rivers, ponds and high annual rainfall. Second, no technology currently exists to deal with the ongoing environmental management challenges at SRS, as evidenced in a 2008 report by the National Academies of Science. Most instructive was the report's absence of specific recommendations for further remediation beyond massive investments in clean-up technology research and development.

Third, in 1996 the National Academies of Science estimated the cost of a reprocessing system to handle the disposal of domestic nuclear waste in excess of \$700 billion. Considering concerns about the economy and our soaring national debt, we should be pursuing the most cost-effective energy generation and storage options available, not subsidizing expensive policies that saddle our future generations with more debt.

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 recent 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 centered exclusively on a long-term solution to our nuclear waste challenge. This discussion should be guided by policy, not politics, and by science, not special interests. Only when this fundamental issue is resolved will we be ready to engage in a broader discussion about any potential uses of nuclear waste, including reprocessing. Conservation Voters looks forward to participating in this discussion and we thank the Blue Ribbon Commission for your efforts to help facilitate it.

Ann Timberlake

Debbie Parker

Executive Director

Legislative Director

Conservation Voters of South Carolina is the non-partisan political arm of South Carolina's conservation community. We work to support pro-conservation policies and we also facilitate the Common Agenda process, which brings together 36 organizations representing 45,000 citizens dedicated to a clean, healthy, economically vibrant South Carolina.