

**Statement by U.S. Representative Paul Broun, M.D. (GA-10)
Before the Blue Ribbon Commission
Public Meeting in Augusta, Georgia
January 7, 2011**

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the Commission and its staff for taking the time to come down to Georgia and South Carolina and tour the Department of Energy's Savannah River Site yesterday and for holding one of its public meetings here. I welcome the Commissioners and staff and hope you will find these meetings and briefings informative and useful as you assess and make recommendations to the future of spent nuclear fuel disposal.

Today, you will hear from many experts on this issue, but I would like to add my voice to those who will share with you the necessity of building Yucca Mountain – or some final repository for used fuel and high-level radioactive waste. Having a permanent storage solution is vital to this region and the nation as a whole.

I would like to share four key factors that demonstrate the need for permanent storage solution. First, in Georgia alone, almost a quarter (24.7%) of its electricity generation comes from nuclear energy. Two power stations – Hatch and Vogtle – have the capacity to generate over 4000 megawatts of emission-free energy. Despite the recent downturn in the economy, over the long run, Georgia's economy is expected to grow as will the demand for energy.

Second, there is already a significant amount (2,410 Metric Tons) of Commercial Used Nuclear Fuel currently stored in Georgia awaiting disposition. Georgia ranks ninth in the nation in this category, while the neighboring states of Alabama, Florida, South Carolina and North Carolina are also in the top ten.

Third, the Department of Energy's (DOE) Savannah River Site is very important to the region economically and environmentally. Significant amounts of DOE high level radioactive waste and used fuel, most of it produced in support of America's nuclear weapons programs, will remain stored at that site until a repository is available. It is estimated that the amount of high level radioactive waste on the Savannah River site is the radioactive equivalent of approximately another 3000 metric tons of used nuclear fuel.

Finally, electricity consumers in Georgia have contributed a significant amount of money to the Nuclear Waste Fund since 1983 - \$716 million to date. Nationally, Georgia places tenth in this category. These funds have contributed towards the nearly \$10 billion that DOE has already spent on Yucca Mountain and the additional \$20 billion unspent balance in the nuclear waste fund. In 1998, DOE began to default on its contracts to begin removing used fuel from reactor sites. As a result, nuclear plant operators were forced to purchase and load dry cask storage systems on their sites as space inside the reactors used fuel pools began to fill up. Some have estimated that Georgia consumers have also spent well over \$50 million in additional dry storage costs because of this default, and these costs continue to mount.

I appreciate the complexity of this issue and difficult job ahead for the Commission. I would like to reiterate just how vital and necessary it is to have a permanent resolution of the spent nuclear fuel disposal issue. As a member of the House Committee of Science and Technology, I know great advances are being made each day on technological advancements in recycling and storage. However, this does not negate the need for Yucca Mountain, which is still the best option. No scientific rationale has been provided to justify the closure of Yucca Mountain, despite over 25 years of scientific study and review. This is contrary to the President's promise that science will inform policy. Closure of Yucca Mountain will delay the safe disposition of spent fuel for decades, leave the federal government open to billions of dollars in liability, and wasted billions more in sunk costs. As the President stated in 2009, "Science and the scientific process must inform and guide any decision of my Administration on a wide range of issues..." Unfortunately, in the case of Yucca Mountain, it appears, at least initially, that this principle was ignored in order to appease a political constituency.

Not only should DOE do what is necessary to preserve the progress made there by maintaining the resources and knowledge base, but I urge the Commission to keep Yucca Mountain on the table in the list of options you are considering. Regardless of elections and different priorities for different Administrations, a stable long-term spent nuclear fuel policy must be achieved, and the funds that have already been collected and continue to be collected should be made available for their intended purpose. I will do my part in Congress and hope this Commission and the current and future Administrations do the same.

Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to share my views and for taking the time to come down to Georgia and South Carolina.