

Summary of Remarks by Brian Tucker,
President, North Augusta, SC, Chamber of Commerce
before the Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future
Augusta, GA, January 7, 2011

We are disappointed in the Government's decision to halt work on Yucca Mountain. At the same time, we recognize this decision pushes your efforts to the forefront of the national debate on where we go from here.

We are now focused on solutions. Choosing the right options for closing the nuclear fuel cycle is a significant challenge that will have important consequences on our national security, our nation's energy future and our ability to maintain world leadership in the nuclear technology we created.

With respect to handling spent fuel and high-level waste, the Savannah River Site has been a problem solver for more than a half century. Tens of thousands of tons of radioactive material were reprocessed at SRS from the mid-1950s through the beginning of this decade.

Today, H Canyon remains the only hardened nuclear chemical separations plant in operation in the United States. Due to its unique capabilities, H Canyon can support both DOE environmental cleanup and nuclear nonproliferation goals while helping to extend our available uranium fuel supplies.

Part of H Canyon's mission has been to blend down weapons-grade uranium into low enriched uranium suitable for fuel in commercial power reactors. Through its use in Tennessee Valley Authority reactors, this material is now providing electricity to homes throughout the Southeast. It is this kind of well-executed, innovative, problem-solving technology that we believe can be brought to bear in helping to resolve the pressing issues being addressed by this Commission.

We believe this Commission's report to the President should include a recommendation for a robust, well-funded technology and engineering development program aimed at deploying the "next generation" fuel cycle program. The proven capabilities and outstanding expertise of the Savannah River Site ... including Savannah River National Laboratory ... should play a key role in helping us meet this challenge.

We strongly urge this Commission to recommend that a geologic repository be provided. We further urge you to establish Yucca Mountain ... which has been called "the most studied piece of real estate on earth" ... as the required reference point unless and until a technically equal alternative has been identified and approved by the NRC.

We also request that this Commission recommend that the Nuclear Waste Fund be utilized as the source of funding for any program designed to close the back end of the nuclear fuel cycle and for the disposition of defense waste.

