

Presentation  
“Potential Roles for Local Governments in America’s Nuclear Future”

by

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For a panel discussion on  
Topics related to Public Safety, Environmental and Local Concerns

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Co-Chairmen Domenici and Peterson, distinguished members of the Reactor and Fuel Cycle Technologies Subcommittee, I am here representing the Energy Communities Alliance, the member organization of local governments working on and impacted by nuclear issues. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to participate in this panel and address the potential role for local governments in America's nuclear future.

We think it's very important to recognize that local governments and communities are the potential hosts of sites for new nuclear reactors and technologies. They will be impacted from the beginning to the end of any nuclear project's lifetime. It is necessary that they be involved.

Today you've asked us to specifically address two issues:

- 1) What role should local communities and governments play, if any, in the developments and demonstration of new nuclear technologies?**
  
- 2) With respect to nuclear reactors and fuel cycle facilities, what are the key safety, environmental and security concerns for local communities, and how should they be addressed?**

In response to the first question, local governments have a critical role to play.

Local governments:

- **Ensure the environmental health and safety of their communities.**

- **Provide outreach and education on nuclear issues impacting the community.**
- **Act as a liaison between the site and local community.**
- **Advocate for local concerns and priorities.**
- **As is appropriate, they advocate for the site and the project.**
- **And finally, local governments ensure economic opportunities exist for the community.**

It is the primary role of local government to protect the health, safety and well-being of the community. To that end, the local government cares about the environmental and health impacts of *any* project. Nuclear energy and nuclear waste are issues that raise concerns for most communities, and understanding the details of the project, and both the short-term and long-term impacts are critical. But once known, the local government can help assure that the project is safe, and then it can usually be supported.

In it's role to **provide outreach and education on nuclear issues impacting the community**, local governments usually serve as the honest broker. It can be a trusted source of information, providing education not only to alleviate concerns, but also to provide awareness of the potential benefits of a proposed project. Outreach and education can include: hosting meetings for the community at large with site managers and contractors, creating public information centers, building websites, and producing white papers outlining nuclear initiatives.

**As a liaison between the site and local community, local governments** help to establish and maintain clear and open lines of communication. This ultimately builds the trust and accountability among parties which is essential to the success of a project..

Local governments, as a trusted third party, hold regular public meetings and provide information to the community. Site operators should use them as a point of contact, they get information to the local governments and the local governments can share it with the community through these meetings and other established channels.

Local governments can provide also information back to the site operators.

An important area where local governments can help is perception of risk. In order for any nuclear policy or project to be acceptable and successful, both the technical risk and the perceived risk of impacted parties must be addressed. This is especially important in regards to nuclear issues given that those risks do not always align with each other.

In their role as **advocates for local concerns and priorities**, local governments develop relationships at the federal level, with the state, with private companies, and at the site, ensuring that local values, concerns and priorities are understood and taken into account as new projects are planned.

On the other side, they can be **advocates, when appropriate, for the site and project.**

Local governments can help develop support for or education on a project and the potential benefits to a community. Once that support is in place, local governments can represent the community position to potential partners at the regional, state, corporate or federal level.

Finally, the local government has an important role in **ensuring economic opportunities exist for the community.**

A community volunteering to host a nuclear facility should be provided economic benefits and local governments are uniquely positioned to negotiate on behalf of the impacted community with developers of a new nuclear project. These benefits may include funding for oversight, or training and jobs for the local workforce.

In fact, there are already communities looking to ensure there is a workforce with the capabilities necessary to support the nuclear technologies or recycling facilities being developed. For example, the local governments and community leaders around the Savannah River Site and Hanford are leading nuclear workforce initiatives that engage state legislators, universities, community colleges, secondary educators, community reuse organizations, economic development entities, unions and nuclear employers. These groups are partnering to identify need and to develop training and retraining programs. They want to attract future nuclear development and jobs to their communities and their regions.

In fact, there may be an opportunity with the Energy Parks Initiative being considered by DOE. A number of ECA members see an opportunity to use DOE clean-up sites within their communities for the development and demonstration of new nuclear technologies and the creation of new nuclear jobs.

New nuclear technologies can be licensed under DOE regulations and requirements prior to commercial regulation and licensing under the NRC, potentially saving significant time and money. In addition, existing community assets can be used - a highly trained workforce, extensive infrastructures, natural resources, property and location. Given the familiarity with nuclear issues in these communities, there is a greater likelihood of support for a project and recognition of the benefits -- as long as the impacted communities and local governments are engaged from the outset.

Ultimately, local governments have many critical roles that affect whether a project will be developed. They need to be involved in the decision-making process and ensure environmental health and safety is regularly assessed and addressed.

***In response to the second issue – the key safety, environmental and security concerns for local governments related to the development and demonstration of new nuclear reactors and facilities - many of the environmental and safety concerns of impacted communities are likely to remain the same as they are now.***

*Specifically, the issues are:*

- *Security*
- *Waste handling*
- *Transportation*

Fortunately, in the energy communities adjacent to and impacted by DOE and NNSA sites, and in some communities around reactor sites, there is a familiarity and a greater comfort level with nuclear energy and nuclear issues.

There is also a good sense of what is needed to fully address these concerns:

- **As I have already stated, communication.**
- **A good relationship with DOE and the contractors, or if it's not a federally-owned, the owners/operators at a site.**
- **Assured funding for oversight and outreach.**
- **Education and training**

For example, in regards to security, nuclear security costs are astronomical.

Communities will need to communicate with DOE, contractors and/or the private sector to look at security alternatives for the future. For example, at Hanford there is monitored retrievable storage – a huge, underground concrete vault with a building on top of it.

The cost to secure that building is currently \$40 - \$50 million per year.

It will also be very important that local governments and communities partner with DOE or the private sector to ensure there is funding for training and to run practice drills. If and when new nuclear facilities are built, they are likely to be sited in less densely populated areas where there are fewer resources for emergency planning and response. Where the funding for future security will come from, and how much, will need to be addressed.

An example in regards to **transportation**: DOE is legally only obliged to share shipping information with the state. Sometimes the person in the relevant position at DOE shares information with the locals, but sometimes they do not. Again, communication is key.

Failure to engage and ensure communication among stakeholders at all levels – local, state and federal – can lead to political posturing and prevent a project from moving forward. Senator Domenici understood this and was instrumental in writing legislation in an appropriations bill that brought communities interested in hosting nuclear sites together with DOE to discuss the key issues. In fact, ECA created a paper summarizing the meeting and the recommendations of the local governments. One of the most consistent responses was a need to ensure good communication among all parties.

As a starting point, ECA proposes using provisions in the Nuclear Waste Policy Act which allocated local funding for “affected units of local governments” as a model to: provide resources to permit the local community to hire third party scientists to review data and increase public confidence in the scientific integrity of a project, to provide



impacted citizens the means to interact with the federal government and any operator, and to demonstrate a commitment to external oversight over nuclear project.

**I also want to outline another concern for many local governments. As recycling facilities and new technologies are being discussed, developing a final waste plan needs to remain a priority and new waste streams are not created without a path for their disposal.**

Most ECA members support and are interested in exploring hosting spent fuel recycling sites. But, uncertainty regarding where waste will end up directly affects health and safety decisions in communities hosting sites that currently produce or store waste. The communities that currently host high-level waste and spent fuel do not want to become de-facto long-term storage sites.

There is also concern about the environmental impacts of creating increased amounts of Greater than Class C and low-level waste streams associated with reprocessing. Neither has clear, final disposition paths.

## **Conclusion**

Eleven sites around the country volunteered during DOE's now-defunct domestic Global Nuclear Energy Partnership initiative. Congress directed DOE to go back to those communities and address nuclear issues. So there *are* communities that want nuclear

development – and the jobs and economic benefits that go with it – there in their backyard. They can be advocates. They can contribute to the solution for nuclear waste disposition. The discussion of a nuclear future needs to engage them now and can only benefit from engaging them now, in a meaningful way.