

NEW  
ENGLAND  
GOVERNORS'  
CONFERENCE, INC.



December 16, 2009

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The Honorable Steven Chu  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Chu:

We are writing regarding your announced intention to appoint a Blue Ribbon Commission to examine alternatives to the current federal program for managing and disposing of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste. We hope this initiative will lead to the development of a sustainable, long-term policy that appropriately recognizes and balances national, regional, and state interests.

As you know, New England is home to three permanently shut down single unit reactor sites. At each of these sites, all decommissioning and site restoration activities have been completed in areas removed from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission license for each site. Spent nuclear fuel storage areas and activities remain licensed by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Accordingly, all three sites could be fully returned to the benefit of the local communities, but for the fact that the used nuclear fuel and high level radioactive waste has not been removed by the federal government as required by law and contract. In addition, the ratepayers of New England continue to pay tens of millions of dollars annually for the continued storage of such material at both decommissioned and operating nuclear reactor sites. We would further note that all of the nuclear waste material at these sites is stored in dual-purpose canisters that have been licensed by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for transportation.

There is growing consensus that the expedited removal and consolidation of spent nuclear fuel and high-level waste from decommissioned reactor sites is sound public policy. The Department of Energy has heard this message from, among others: members of New England's Congressional delegation; the New England Council; the Maine Public Utilities Commission; the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners; the National Conference of State Legislatures; the National Commission on Energy Policy; the American Physical Society; the National Research Council; and the Nuclear Waste Strategy Coalition.

We also request that you direct the Blue Ribbon Commission to develop policy alternatives and recommendations that will lead to the removal of the spent nuclear fuel and high level waste stored at decommissioned and operating reactor sites at the earliest possible date. As you know, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission generally licenses canisters for spent nuclear fuel storage for only 20 years. After this time the Nuclear Regulatory Commission must review the storage system and may only relicense canisters for additional 20 year periods. This uncertainty in the

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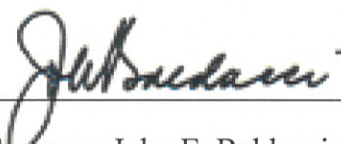
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storage time for the canisters presents the potential for significant safety and environmental issues if a system fails to receive relicensing for decommissioned reactor sites that no longer have the ability to move spent nuclear fuel and high level waste between canisters.

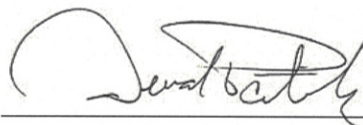
We are pleased to learn that you recently stated your intention to appoint a Commission member with experience managing spent nuclear fuel at decommissioned reactor sites. It is crucial that this type of expertise be represented on the Commission.

Thank you for considering our views as you approach this most important task.

Sincerely,



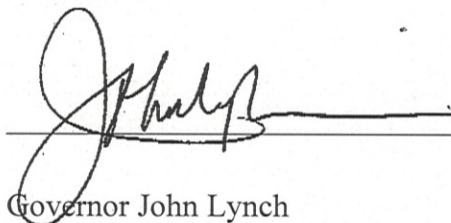
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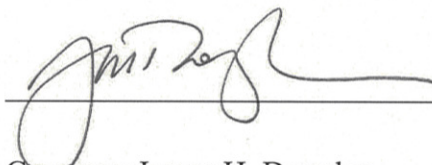
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