



Nuclear Energy Information Service

Illinois' Nuclear Power Watchdog since 1981

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PRESS RELEASE

Flawed High-Level Radioactive Waste Legislation Introduced Could put Illinois in crosshairs to become de facto national dumpsite

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CHICAGO—Controversial radioactive waste legislation was introduced into the U.S. Senate today that could result in Illinois becoming a de facto national high-level radioactive waste dumpsite until at least 2048.

The “**Nuclear Waste Administration Act of 2013**” (**S. 1240**) was introduced by a bi-partisan group of Senators consisting of Senators Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., and Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn. – the leaders of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development – and Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chairman Ron Wyden, D-Ore., and Ranking Member Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska.

The legislation purports to “...take[s] immediate steps to more safely store the most dangerous radioactive waste, and lay[s] out a clear plan for a permanent solution,” according to bill co-sponsor, Sen. Ron Wyden.

“Regrettably, we seem to be getting set up for another round of ‘kick the radwaste can down the road,’” observes David Kraft, director of Nuclear Energy Information Service, an Illinois nuclear watchdog group. “There’s nothing substantive in the legislation that’s any better than the nothing we have in place now to prevent the government from missing target dates in the future for establishing a permanent high-level radioactive waste (HLRW) disposal facility. It’s the illusion of progress without the substance, just to allow for the creation of more radioactive waste,” Kraft says.

The legislation does call for several radical changes in law dealing with HLRW. First, it removes control for HLRW disposal from the DOE, and invests that responsibility in a Waste Administrator and a 5 member Oversight Board. Second, it claims that the process of siting HLRW facilities will be “consent based.” Third, it calls for the creation of interim storage facilities for HLRW while the Oversight Board searches for a final permanent disposal site.

That last change could have serious implications for Illinois, according to Kraft.

“The first such ‘centralized interim storage’ (CIS) facility is dedicated to taking HLRW from closed reactors, or which experience closures or emergencies. A 2012 report from Oak Ridge National Laboratory recommends Illinois as the nation’s best location for such a facility, based on transportation and location parameters,” Kraft points out.

The 2012 study by Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL/TM-2012-237) states:

“...the consolidated ISFSI [spent fuel storage] site in Illinois is the single optimized site for an ISFSI solution when only [spent nuclear fuel] at orphaned reactors is considered relative to siting a consolidated ISFSI.” (p. xviii)

“The CIS sites would allegedly be “temporary,” but the Federal Government’s notion of ‘temporary’ is laughable. Illinois could become the nation’s de facto permanent HLRW dump for decades,” Kraft says. The law sets a target date of 2048 for the operation of the disposal facility. An Illinois CIS could be operational by 2021. An Illinois CIS facility could get well over 6,200 additional tons of HLRW, above and beyond the 8,600 tons it already stores at Illinois reactors run by Exelon, according to the numbers in the Oak Ridge report.

NEIS has been trying for weeks to get face to face meetings with Senators Durbin and Kirk, and Governor Quinn to get their positions and discuss this impending catastrophe, but without success.

“Since 2002 NEIS and hundreds of other environmental and safe energy organizations have suggested a method called “hardened onsite storage” (HOSS) as a means of storing HLRW relatively safely at reactor sites until the federal government constructs a permanent disposal facility. We have been ignored. It’s time that Illinois’ politicians start paying attention, before the trucks start rolling in,” Kraft warns.