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TO: Mr. Robert E. Browning, Director
FROM: Paul T. Prestholt, Sr. On-Site Licensing Representative
DATE: December 2, 1986
SUBJECT: Newspaper Articles

Please find enclosed more information that appeared in our local newspaper that is of interest.

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Nuclear dump site plan and politics don't mix

While public furor mounts over President Reagan's arms deal with Iran, the administration also has lost a staunch supporter for its current nuclear dump plan.

Rep. Morris Udall, D-Ariz., was one of the architects of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982 and a leading supporter of the plan, even when it drew heavy congressional fire last spring.

On May 28 Energy Secretary John Herrington announced Yucca Mountain, 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas, Hanford, Wash., and Deaf Smith County, Texas, were the three finalists for the nation's first nuclear waste repository.

In addition, Herrington called off the search for a second dumpsite in the eastern United States.

Those decisions angered Western congressional representatives. Nevada officials filed five lawsuits against Herrington and the Energy Department the day the announcement was made.

Although a westerner, Udall defended the Energy Department's program, trying to head off funding cuts proposed by his Western colleagues in Congress.

Recently, however, Udall withdrew his support of DOE's plans to find itself a rocky hole for 70,000 tons of nuclear wastes from power plant reactors and defense activities.

The chairman of the House Interior Committee said revelations about DOE's political manipulations of the program caused him to withdraw his support.

The Reagan administration, Udall continued, undermined its program's credibility by stopping the hunt for an eastern dump site for political reasons.

All that did was try to protect Republican candidates from public disapproval during election year, Udall told a joint meeting of the Atomic

Industrial Forum and the American Nuclear Society.

But Udall took a tougher stand than decrying the dump project on politics alone.

He warned the nuclear industry that if the nuclear waste disposal program's credibility was not restored, "the future of the nuclear option is in doubt."

Udall's committee oversees DOE's work based on the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982, which requires two dumpsites, the first in the West, the second in the East.

Herrington said he halted the second repository search because estimates of nuclear wastes from the nation's 100 nuclear power plants had dropped drastically.

However, New Hampshire, the state hosting the first crucial primary in the 1988 presidential election, was top contender for the second repository, much to the anger of its residents.

New Hampshire officials met with Vice President George Bush, a top contender for the 1988 presidential race, and complained early last year.

Then the announcement was made in May.

Udall came to the meeting armed with a DOE memo outlining the pros and cons of postponing an Eastern site. The biggest worry? That it would look too political. There was no scientific reason used in the argument.

The DOE's policy has been tainted by politics. It may take an entirely new approach and another nationwide search to fairly find a repository site for the mounting mound of nuclear garbage in the U.S.

For now, the DOE has lost one of its biggest allies in Udall. Nevadans and other Western lawmakers join him in his criticism.

And Eastern congressmen would do well to join in this nuclear fight, because storing nuclear wastes 3,000 miles from their reactors puts the radioactive junk in everybody's back yard.