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MAJORITY—225-6427
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ONE HUNDRED FIRST CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY, AND NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 8-371-B-C
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

August 24, 1990

The Honorable Kenneth M. Carr
Chairman
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, DC 20555

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I was informed yesterday afternoon by the staff of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) of new environmental problems at the Sequoyah Fuels Corporation nuclear fuel plant in Gore, Oklahoma.

According to information provided by NRC and Sequoyah Fuels, groundwater at the site has been contaminated by high levels of uranium from processing facilities. According to the preliminary notification issued by NRC Region IV, the contamination levels are 35,000 times higher than applicable environmental action level.

As you know, this is not the first time that a question has occurred concerning the possible impact on public health and safety from this facility. The announcement yesterday of groundwater contamination has renewed my concern and the concern of a number of my constituents over the possible consequences of releases of radioactive materials from this plant. As a result of this most recent announcement, I have received a number of inquiries by constituents in the Gore area who, once again, are faced with uncertainty as to the risk to their health and safety from this facility.

Given the high-level of uranium found from an entirely unexpected source -- the groundwater at the Sequoyah Fuels site, it is imperative that the extent of this contamination be determined as well as whether this contamination has spread off site. Although Sequoyah Fuels indicates that it believes that these releases took place before 1984, it is also imperative that the source of this contamination be determined and necessary corrective actions taken.

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Consequently, I am requesting that the NRC conduct a detailed investigation of the extent and cause of the uranium contamination of the groundwater at the site. As part of this investigation, I am also requesting that NRC determine whether the environmental monitoring system in place at the site is adequate to detect the presence and migration of contaminated groundwater and whether contaminated groundwater has migrated off site or is likely to do so.

I appreciate the effort made by the NRC staff to inform me of the events at Sequoyah Fuels in such a timely manner and want to commend them for their professionalism and assistance in obtaining additional information concerning this situation. Please continue to keep me informed of all relevant regulatory activities by the NRC related to the Sequoyah Fuels plant.

If you or your staff have any questions concerning these requests, please contact me directly or David Berick of the Subcommittee staff at 202-225-6427.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mike Synar". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

MIKE SYNAR
Chairman