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ADDRESSEE: Gregory Jaczko

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U.S. House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET
Washington, DC 20515

October 11, 2010

The Honorable Gregory B. Jaczko
Chairman
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Mail Stop O-16G4
Washington, DC 20555-0001

Dear Chairman Jaczko:

I am writing to express my deep concerns with reports that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff has been instructed to cease the review of the Department of Energy's (DOE) application for a license to operate a nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada. As you know, there are several pending lawsuits on this matter, and the commission has not ruled on the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board's determination that DOE cannot legally withdraw the application. I urge you to ensure that NRC's review of the application be continued.

On July 27, 2010, I called a hearing before the Budget Committee to hear testimony from the Congressional Budget Office and the Departments of Energy and Justice on the budget implications of ending this project. I came away from that hearing more convinced than ever that terminating Yucca Mountain would be a costly mistake that would maintain the storage of high-level nuclear waste indefinitely at more than one hundred sites across the nation, including those in South Carolina.

Nearly 3,800 metric tons of uranium is stored at four nuclear plants that are home to seven reactors in South Carolina alone. Since 1998, the U.S. government has been legally obligated to remove waste from these sites and about one hundred others nationwide. The Federal government also is legally required to remove defense nuclear waste from the nuclear weapons complex, including the Savannah River site. However, the government has not met its obligation yet, even though Congress decided that Yucca Mountain is the appropriate site for this waste. In response, the State of South Carolina and Aiken County, South Carolina, have filed lawsuits on this matter that remain pending in court.

I remain strongly opposed to the Administration's actions to terminate the Yucca Mountain project and urge the NRC to move forward in fulfilling its duty to review the license application.

Sincerely,

John M. Spratt, Jr.
Chairman