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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1301

September 18, 1989

Congressional Affairs Office
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
1717 H Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20555

Dear Friends:

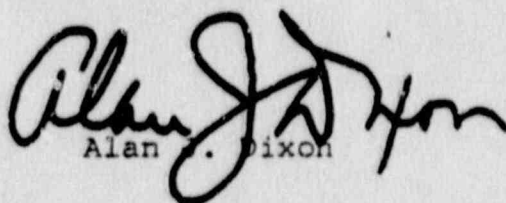
Enclosed is a letter I have received from my constituents, Martin J. Murray and Robert E. Pritchard.

Because of my desire to be responsive to all communications, your consideration of this matter is requested.

Your views would be appreciated. Please direct all correspondence to the attention of Dawn D. Hansen of my staff.

Kindest personal regards.

Sincerely,


Alan J. Dixon

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Boyer
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In an effort to address the costly task of disposing of the rapidly accumulating volume of "low level" radioactive waste generated over the years by the nuclear industry, a scheme has been designed, and strongly advocated, by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), the Environmental Protection Agency and the nuclear industry, to deregulate "low level" radioactive waste to the level where there would be no reason for concern.

It should be mentioned here that "low level" does not mean low risk. "Low level" radioactive wastes vary in hazardous life from a few hours to hundreds of thousands of years, and range from irradiated animal carcasses to contaminated clothing and test tubes to intensely radioactive industrial and utility waste and highly radioactive metals from the interiors of nuclear reactors.

This deadly plot, labeled "below regulatory concern" or BRC, will result in the unregulated disposal of radioactive wastes, thus exposing the citizens of Chicago, Cook County, the State of Illinois, and indeed, everywhere, to a dangerous new source of radiation - a level of radiation which the NRC believes is trivial and not worth the money to regulate.

If deregulated, "low level" radioactive waste would no longer need to be regulated for radioactivity and could, therefore, be handled as just so much household or industrial garbage. Radioactive waste may be joining old tires, banana peels and other regular garbage at our local landfill, could go to both solid waste and hazardous waste incinerators, into neighborhood dumpsters, and down the drain to sewage treatment centers. Radioactive paper and metal could be recycled into consumer products.

The implications of this deregulation for the solid waste industry and for the international waste trade, are far-reaching and ominous. Unsuspecting employees, at incinerator sites, landfills, recycling centers and sewage treatment plants, garbage handlers and haulers, firefighters, dock workers, ships' crews etc., will, unknowingly, be placed 'at risk' when handling radioactive materials, the health effects of which may not appear for years.

It is important to keep in mind that there is no amount of radiation that is insignificant. There is no threshold below which radiation causes no harm. Radiation is silent, and long-range, violence.

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The generators of radioactive waste are morally obliged to take full responsibility and do whatever it takes to keep their wastes from intruding into either common or private property. Isolating wastes and radiation, from any activity, should be part of the cost of doing business, and we taxpayers should not be expected, yet again, to bail out an ailing industry (nuclear), only this time with our lives.

The city, counties, and the State of Illinois should vigorously oppose the reclassification of any radioactive waste to "below regulatory concern" (BRC). Our representatives need to initiate a resolution or enforceable ordinance which condemns the BRC policy and outlaws the disposal of deregulated radioactive wastes within our borders.

The BRC legislation is being slipped through without our consultation - the people being told to take the risks. In our democracy, it is imperative that citizens retain the right to participate in decisions which have such profound impact on the health and safety of their families and communities, and indeed, on countless future generations. Clearly a broad public debate on this issue is essential.

Thank you, and may I please hear from you concerning this most serious, and urgent, matter?

Respectfully,

Co-Director
Robert E. Pritchard

P.O. Box 323
Willow Springs, IL 60480

Co-Director
Martin J. Murray