

HOUSE MEMORIAL 21

54TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2020

INTRODUCED BY

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This document incorporates amendments that have been adopted during the current legislative session. The document is a tool to show the amendments in context and is not to be used for the purpose of amendments.

A MEMORIAL

IN OPPOSITION TO THE TRANSPORTATION OF HIGH-LEVEL RADIOACTIVE WASTE TO, AND STORAGE IN, NEW MEXICO.

WHEREAS, the problem of what to do with nuclear waste is ongoing and largely unanswered; and

WHEREAS, finding repositories for spent nuclear fuel is a concern, as many types of radioactive waste remain dangerously radioactive for thousands of years after they are no longer useful in a commercial reactor; and

WHEREAS, the Eddy-Lea energy alliance, an alliance of the

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cities of Carlsbad and Hobbs and Eddy and Lea counties, was formed to focus on the creation of an "interim" storage facility for spent nuclear fuel; and

WHEREAS, Holtec international has applied to the United States nuclear regulatory commission for a license to construct and operate a consolidated interim storage facility on land located between Hobbs and Carlsbad, along United States highway 62/180, and to transport up to one hundred thousand metric tons of high-level radioactive waste, or spent fuel, from ninety-six commercial nuclear reactors in the United States; and

WHEREAS, despite the fact that New Mexico has never had an operational commercial nuclear reactor, the state nevertheless has hundreds of abandoned and unreclaimed uranium mining sites that have compromised the health of multiple generations of people, including the Native American population, and that have contaminated soil and water; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico is already the storage site of the nation's nuclear-weapons-defense-related transuranic waste at the waste isolation pilot plant near Carlsbad; and

WHEREAS, the transport to New Mexico of high-level radioactive waste HENRC→by rail←HENRC from the eastern United States, where ninety percent of the nuclear reactors are located, creates an unacceptable risk for New Mexicans and residents in more than forty other states; and

WHEREAS, the proposed "interim" storage facility

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anticipates a "temporary" storage period of fifty years, but since no permanent repository exists, such "interim" storage could become permanent; and

WHEREAS, Holtec international's plan to build proposed interim storage of high-level radioactive waste in New Mexico has been met with stringent opposition from many sectors; and

WHEREAS, in a June 7, 2019 letter to the United States secretary of energy and the chair of the United States nuclear regulatory commission, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham stated that the interim storage facility poses significant and unacceptable risks to New Mexicans, the environment and the state's economy; and

WHEREAS, the governor also noted that the facility poses unacceptable risk to New Mexicans, who look to southeastern New Mexico as a driver of economic growth in the state, with agricultural industry contributions of approximately three billion dollars (\$3,000,000,000) per year to the state's economy, of which three hundred million dollars (\$300,000,000) is generated in Eddy and Lea counties, where the proposed facility would be located; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner of Public Lands Stephanie Garcia Richard also raised concerns with the proposal, stating that New Mexico is not the right location for high-level nuclear storage and that there is no guarantee that high-level nuclear waste can be safely transported to and through New Mexico or

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that the site would truly be "interim"; and

WHEREAS, existing industrial, agricultural and ranching businesses that generate more than thirty-eight thousand jobs and more than three billion dollars (\$3,000,000,000) in annual revenues to the state and oil and gas production that generates more than two billion dollars (\$2,000,000,000) in annual tax revenue to the state could be negatively affected by the proposed facility, including that high-level radioactive waste could threaten the land values and marketability of those products; and

WHEREAS, tourism is a major contributor to New Mexico's economy, with visitor spending generating income, jobs and tax revenue, and in 2018 just over thirty-seven million five hundred thousand visitors spent seven billion one hundred million dollars (\$7,100,000,000) in New Mexico, according to the "Economic Impact of Tourism in New Mexico 2018" report; and

WHEREAS, record numbers of visits to state parks, historical sites and museums increased for the seventh consecutive year, with thirty-seven million five hundred thousand trips taken to and around the state in 2018, visitor spending having increased seven percent in 2018 and visitor spending sustaining eight and five-tenths percent of all jobs in New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, the creation of a high-level radioactive waste storage facility in New Mexico jeopardizes the state's existing

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industrial, agricultural and ranching businesses, runs counter to the promotion of tourism and the diversification of New Mexico's economy and threatens the health and safety of New Mexico residents;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the house of representatives oppose the transportation of high-level radioactive waste to, and storage in, New Mexico; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the governor, the New Mexico congressional delegation, the United States secretary of energy and the United States assistant secretary for office of nuclear energy.

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