

**U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY**

**Joint Hearing:
Subcommittee on Investigations & Oversight
Subcommittee on Energy & Environment**

Statement of Representative Brad Miller

***Review of the Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future Draft
Recommendations***

**Thursday, October 27, 2011
10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
2318 Rayburn House Office Building**

This is a very odd hearing. We are considering the draft report of a blue ribbon commission with no witnesses from the commission to explain even their tentative findings.

It is very likely that we will need to rely on nuclear power more in the future, but with nuclear power still far more expensive than other forms of energy, even with massive subsidies from the federal government, and with the construction of nuclear power plants requiring the capital investment of many billions of dollars, which investors have been understandably reluctant to put down, it is not at all clear why we did not wait at least until the commission issued a final report.

And while it is hard to imagine an energy future for the next couple of generations that does not include more nuclear power, there are still many reasons for caution, as the experience in Fukushima should underscore.

One of the unresolved issues is what to do with the high level radioactive waste, already 80,000 tons and growing, that nuclear power plants produce. The high level waste will need to be stored safely for 10,000 years. That's a long time. And we have to figure out how to transport the waste safely to wherever we store it.

Unfortunately, the question of storage of nuclear has always been driven more by politics than by science. We will hear today from local leaders in Nye County, Nevada, who would welcome the economic boost of storing nuclear waste at the proposed yucca mountain facility. But the communities that the waste would go through, notably Las Vegas, are adamantly opposed to the proposed yucca mountain facility.

The prevailing view of Nevadans is reflected in the Nevada congressional delegation's opposition, president Obama's opposition, and the opposition of three republican presidential candidates when asked in Nevada. It's good to be both an early primary and a swing state in the fall.

And the resentment of Nevadans to the siting of the facility in their state is more than understandable. A quarter century ago there were at least three proposed sites: one in the district of the speaker of the house, another in the district of the house majority leader, and Yucca Mountain. Senator Reid is powerful now, but at the time he was in his first year of service in the senate. The amendment to site the facility in Nevada was colloquially called the “screw Nevada” amendment at the time.

We do need more science and less politics in this decision, but there is little to suggest today’s hearing is a move towards science, away from politics.