

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2803

October 18, 2017

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Chairman, House Committee
on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member, House Committee
on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Thornberry and Ranking Member Smith,

I respectfully request that the House Armed Services Committee not waive its jurisdictional authority to consider H.R. 3053, the Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act. This bill would be detrimental to the ability of the Air Force to carry out its air combat training mission at the Nevada Test and Training Range (NTTR) by allowing nuclear waste to be transported within its boundaries to Yucca Mountain. NTTR is the largest air and ground military training space in the contiguous United States and is home to 75 percent of all stateside Air Force live munitions.

In a recent article published by the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson addressed major concerns with the Yucca Mountain Project, citing how it will directly impact the ability of Nellis Air Force Base to complete its mission to train service members for war:

“If Yucca Mountain becomes a storage area, it needs to operate without impacting the ability of the country to defend itself. There is no route across the range that would not impact testing and training.”

Secretary Wilson went on to say that even a route outside of the range’s boundary might create encroachment issues – an issue already plaguing Nellis from a growing Las Vegas urban sprawl.

Secretary Wilson’s concerns are consistent with those expressed to this Committee in 2003 by former Air Force Secretary James Roche and former Chief of Staff General John P. Jumper when discussing the Department of Energy’s proposed transportation route that would cut through the NTTR. This transportation route is still part of the licensing application for the Yucca Mountain Project, and may require flight restrictions that would “negatively impact our readiness activities, mission-critical systems evaluations,” and air combat training.

My colleagues and I in the Nevada delegation have raised a number of issues with the project including its location, which sits less than 100 miles northwest of Las Vegas, atop an aquifer, and in a seismically active area that just experienced a 4.1 earthquake. Additionally, we have raised numerous concerns about provisions in the reckless and wasteful Nuclear Waste Policy Amendment Act, including:

- A 37% increase in the amount of high-level nuclear waste to be dumped in Nevada, which is an extraordinary increase in the amount of waste that has not been studied for safety or environmental impact;
- The call for high-level nuclear waste transports by rail and on the nation's busiest highways, putting millions of Americans at risk in 329 congressional districts;
- Undermining the National Environmental Policy Act for the permitting and construction of infrastructure related to a permanent repository; and
- Allowing the EPA Administrator to make changes in radiation protection standards prior to a final licensing decision.

It is clear that reopening the Yucca Mountain Project leaves our constituents, our country, and our military readiness at risk. Dumping billions of dollars into this project is a reckless waste of federal funds.

I strongly urge the Armed Services Committee to oppose moving H.R. 3053 forward, as it is detrimental to our national security and blatantly ignores the concerns of Nevadans who do not wish to see the federal government turn our state into a dumping ground for nuclear waste from other states.

Thank you for your attention to this national security matter of great importance to all Nevadans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jacky Rosen", with a stylized, cursive script.

Jacky Rosen
Member of Congress