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STATEMENT OF LEWIS C. GREEN AT PUBLIC HEARING,
JANUARY 20, 2000, CONDUCTED BY DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

1 As I understand it, the proposal is to transport more than 70,000 metric tons of high-level radioactive waste from various electric utility sites in various states to Yucca Mountain in Nevada, where the waste is to be left "permanently," in containers of some sort, in an area with a history of earthquakes, volcanoes, and a fluctuating water table. This proposal should be scrapped.

2 Some of this high-level nuclear waste will be toxic for 150 million years. No responsible person can assure us that any container will be designed which will contain that waste for that period of time, even under the best conditions. Further, major unanswered questions remain about the geologic predictability and long-term stability of the Yucca Mountain site, raising further doubts about the safety of this proposal.

3 For almost sixty years we have been generating this high-level radioactive waste, and our scientific experts still have not found a safe way to dispose of it. It is time for Congress to create a *new* Manhattan Project to try to figure out how to clean up the huge messes generated by the first Manhattan Project and the Atomic Age it created. Congress, along with the experts, should step back and re-evaluate the entire national nuclear waste policy.

4... Meantime, the irradiated fuel rods should continue to be stored at the reactor sites, in the current spent fuel pools and in dry storage casks, preferably inside the reactor containment building and related buildings. Where necessary, those buildings should be retrofitted to achieve the requisite safety status. This will be far more safe than attempting to transport all this waste to Yucca Mountain, and burying it there in circumstances that we cannot say are safe.

First, this will avoid the major risk of transporting the equivalent of 2.3 million atom bombs across the highways and railways of this nation for the next thirty years. Accidents happen. If radioactive wastes are put in motion on trucks and trains, traveling throughout 43 states, the people will needlessly be exposed to great risks which could be avoided if these hazardous wastes are left in place in buildings which have been designed to contain them.

Second, maintenance of these wastes at their present locations makes above-ground monitoring possible, enabling us to detect and respond to leaks, while we search for a permanent solution.

4 cont. Third, this preserves the option to use a safe solution, if and when a safe solution is ever found.

5 While the search for a safe solution continues, three steps should be taken immediately:

1. Abandon the ill-conceived proposal to transport this high-level waste to Yucca Mountain and to bury it there.

2. Stop creating any more of this nuclear waste, unless and until safe, permanent disposition can be assured.

3. Where necessary, using the Nuclear Waste Fund, retrofit the existing buildings to achieve maximum safety at the nuclear power plant sites.

Lewis C. Green