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2 REPRESENTATIVE GIBBONS: I'm privileged to be
3 here with our two Senators, Senator Reid and Senator
4 Ensign, along with Congresswoman Shelley Berkley in
5 fighting this effort to bring nuclear waste to the
6 state of Nevada. I want to thank you for allowing us
7 and our delegation the opportunity to testify this
8 evening at this hearing.
9 Just over two weeks ago, the Department of
10 Energy released the Yucca Mountain Preliminary Site
11 Suitability Evaluation. Now here we are, attempting to
12 make enlightened comment on a 300-page document
13 describing undoubtedly the single most controversial
14 project in Nevada's history, past and present. As
15 elected officials, those of us here in Washington are
16 privileged to have staff members help us make sense of
17 government documents. That quite honestly not always
18 themselves make much sense to begin with.
19 Unfortunately, the public -- many of whom are in the
20 audience this evening, and for whom this hearing is

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21 being held -- do not have that luxury.

22 Gentlemen, it took the Department of Energy

23 and its professional scientists well over a decade to

24 draw up this document. Yet, the public is expected to

25 fully comprehend its magnitude in a short order and

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1 make comment on it. Well, I join with our senators in

2 appreciating the 15-day extension. I am of the

3 opinion, as they are, that it is way too short an

4 extension. We should have been given the 60-day

5 extension at least. Clearly, no scientific consensus

6 has ever been reached with regard to ensuring public

7 safety while transporting and storing high-level

8 nuclear waste in Nevada, as has been previously stated.

9 The safety of the citizens of Nevada should always be

10 the government's highest priority and obligation, and

11 we will not settle for less.

12 While I remain adamantly opposed to the

13 current policy, I am hopeful that the Department of

14 Energy will consider alternative means as suggested by

15 Senator Ensign to solving our nation's nuclear waste

16 problem.

17 To the Secretary of Energy this evening, let

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18 me say, it is my hope that your administration will not
19 follow the same footsteps of your predecessors in
20 supporting this irresponsible and misguided policy, and
21 putting nuclear waste in Yucca Mountain. Let me say
22 that having been to our nation's nuclear laboratories,
23 I've personally witnessed the creativity and innovative
24 thinking that is taking place with regard to
25 transmutation and reprocessing technologies for nuclear

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1 waste. And I quite frankly am encouraged by that. And
2 I'm confident that more reasonable methods of dealing
3 with this deadly waste can become a reality, if given
4 appropriate consideration and the resources to develop
5 them. Nevadans, obviously, would like to be part of
6 the solution. But not at the expense of the health and
7 safety of our citizens. The bottom line is that
8 whether it's 5 years or 50 years, or as the evaluation
9 alludes to, 40,000 years, disaster is a very real
10 possibility. With this project. Even a former top
11 official in the Department of Energy who originally
12 supported the initial recommendation of Yucca Mountain
13 recently stated, and let me quote it to you, "Yucca
14 Mountain is not a reasonable view, and in my opinion,

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15 should be put in mothballs," end quote. Clearly,
16 Nevadans do not want to see minds changed tomorrow on
17 decisions made today. Especially when it comes to
18 their safety and their health.
19 I want to thank you for allowing us the
20 opportunity and the rest of the delegation to testify
21 this evening. And I certainly hope that the words we
22 have spoken this evening, and the message that we have
23 conveyed to you are taken back to the Secretary of
24 Energy and clearly stated our objection to this policy
25 and irresponsible process that has taken place. Thank
you.