

**Remarks by  
The Honorable Charles P. Pray  
Co-Chairman Yucca Mountain Task Force  
&  
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**Keynote Address to the  
Joint Capitol Hill Yucca Mountain Summit III  
“Blueprint for Progress”  
October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2005**

I am delighted to be here today to launch this III, -- Joint Capitol Hill -- Yucca Mountain Summit -- and to frame our charge for the next two days of dialog, discussion and maybe a little debate.

I am honored to be serving – along with South Carolina Public Utility Commissioner David Wright – as Co-Chairs of the Yucca Mountain Task Force. Politics make for strange partnerships – Comm. Wright is a Republican, I am a Democrat, I come from a State with a closed nuclear plant and a lesser of an amount of waste in the over all calculations of accumulating amassment of Federally owned nuclear spent fuels, while David represents a State with the largest amassment of U.S.DOE, USOFSF and Foreign nuclear fuels in its role for world security, let alone U.S. security.

The Yucca Mountain Task Force is a joint -- bipartisan, -- national grassroots initiative of the Nuclear Waste Strategy Coalition, U.S. Transport Council, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Decommissioning Plant Coalition, Native American tribal representatives, a growing number of other organizations that collectively represent State organizations, State Regulatory Authorities, nuclear utilities, thousands of business interests and millions of American energy consumers.

Our objective - is to complete the review -- construction -- and initiate the operation of a safe and secured Federal facility for the spent nuclear fuels and the high-level radioactive waste at the Congressional designated -- Yucca Mountain site -- in the State of Nevada.

And, to do so within the most efficient time frame possible -- consistent with all of the appropriate assurances of considerations for the adequate public health – safety – and security for all Americans including our citizens in Nevada, -- as well as, in every State in which Spent Fuels and high-level radioactive waste is currently being held awaiting Federal action, and in every State it will be transported through.

To this end, we are pleased to be a cooperating organization of this third annual Summit and our shared goal of laying out a “Blueprint for Progress” for the Yucca Mountain program.

It is crystal clear we are at a pivotal period for the Yucca Mountain project. Our national economic interest -- driven by energy -- is going through one of its most significant transformation in better than a half a century, -- since the start of the commercial nuclear power age itself, -- and, maybe, even in seventy-five years. I believe we are at a place similar to the transformation our country when a President stepped forward and led a nation as FDR did in the Rural Electrification Act, when an Administration committed a national to a new era of accessible and affordable electricity for all Americans, which in turn drove a nation to greatness.

We are an electrified nation. The nation’s economic and environmental debates, and more significant today, our national security interests are paramount. Energy and energy security, -- national security, -- economic factors all require a mandate for a national federal repository facility, -- for a national solution -- for spent fuels and high-level radioactive waste are even more urgent today than the several decades past when the Nuclear Waste Policy Act was enacted.

More than ever, our critical national security interests overwhelmingly support the consolidation of spent fuel and high-level waste into a federal facility -- as opposed to the continued hodgepodge storage of these materials at 125 different sites in 39 states -- and particularly in the case of totally decommissioning plants.

Four years after September 11<sup>th</sup>, one need not look any further than the location of America's Nuclear power plant. Each is sited on America's coast or a major waterway, -- as is America's industrial and population centers. I understand nearly 165 million Americans live within fifty miles of a nuclear facility.

Let me make it clear -- We believe nuclear plants and the independent spent fuels storage installations are safe, we believe they are secured. We believe the citizens adjacent to these facilities have nothing to fear, - - but we also believe it can be safer -- and, -- it can be more secured. It can be better protected in a more economical manner if it is centralized in a more remote and arid region. It is not common sense?

Given the economics of record and continuing escalating costs for foreign petroleum products, -- and the growing dependency on an insecure -- and unsecured supplies of foreign oil is an unsustainable option for our country -- not only in the short term, but for our long term national security -- we must reduce this habitual dependency.

These vulnerabilities, and a litany of others, which have been made even more transparent in the wake of 9/11 -- and our more recent national disasters in the gulf coast - requires a broader dialogue of whether the nation is going to step up to the plate and resolve many of these questions or are we, -- as a nation, -- going to pass this off to a future generation, like a number of other difficult decisions are being done. If we don't do it -- we do not deserve the benefits of the quantified rewards of our current consumptions of resources.

Yucca Mountain is imperative to continued operation of the current fleet of domestic power generating nuclear energy plants -- and to some, any potential construction of new age nuclear power plants to further economic progress, energy independence and even the diversification of our transportation fuels into hydrogen and electrification options. Understand, some of us who represent States, are restricted, or limited, by State statutes, in promoting or advocating a renewal of any particular forms of energy due to the regulatory roles some of our State members play, but we are committed to the advocacy of "commitments made" to be "commitments met," in the nuclear arena.

Two weeks ago, the NuStart utility consortium announced its intention to proceed with the applications for combined construction and operating licenses for new nuclear plants at the Grand Gulf Nuclear Station, Mississippi and the Bellefonte Nuclear Plant in Alabama. This is the first such action in thirty years with respect to nuclear energy plants. Neither site has a final commitment to build. But, without progress on Yucca Mountain, we will not see that commitment or a new generation of nuclear plants in the United States.

The fact is that the Federal government has a longstanding, overdue, -- outstanding contract with the American people for the creation of a permanent national federal repository facility. American electricity consumers have invested an estimated near \$25 billion dollars in this national solution. And, just three years ago both the United States House and Senate overwhelming - and again - reaffirmed their national accord with the American people through its decision to ratify the licensing and development of the Yucca Mountain repository.

This situation is compounded by an avalanche of lawsuits -- bought on because of the Federal government's inability to honor their own contracts or meet a their own set schedules -- which could cost the American taxpayers between \$38 billion and \$61 billion in additional costs according to one estimate. Sometimes, -- I wonder if those here in Washington really understand these are the same Americans who have already been required to once, -- twice, -- and maybe -- may be forced to be required to pay a third time without a resolution, or a promise kept.

We are committed to working with the Congress, Secretary Bodman and the White House, with Republicans and Democrats alike, -- and others with shared determination ~~conviction~~ to resolve the

longstanding funding, regulatory and licensing needs. The national interest demands that we get on with this job – and we are confident that the proper coalition of national and state organizations represented in this room can and will successfully serve as a catalyst to this end.

The Blueprint for Progress with respect to Yucca Mountain is not rocket science. From the perspective of the Yucca Mountain Task Force, there are five critical path issues, as follows:

1. Obtaining a comprehensive funding solution for Yucca Mountain licensing and development that ensures both necessary funding and full appropriation of the more than \$750M collected annually from nuclear energy consumers. (We support full accountability with the appropriate Congressional oversight of the expenditures of the collections of the American ratepayers monies)
2. Facilitating timely development of a final Yucca Mountain radiation standard.
3. Encouraging the U.S. Department of Energy to submit a high-quality licensing application to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission in a timely manner.
4. Fostering and encouraging exemplary standards of quality assurance, accountability and integrity in the activities of the Yucca Mountain program.
5. Facilitating a national Yucca Mountain transportation and waste acceptance system – along with enhanced stakeholder outreach, particularly along key the corridor states.

Given the inherent challenges in this Blueprint, it would be tempting for some to question whether this recipe is achievable in our professional lifetimes. After all, in the nearly forty years the Government has been actively pursuing a national solution, sometimes at alternating speeds, for high-level radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuels, we have at least a 14 years of schedule slippage and maybe two decades, and billions of dollars expended with questionable tangible progress.

To you utilities out there, could you imagine going before a State Public Utility Commission and saying, “Look, we’ve raised \$24.6 billion -- in rates over the last two decades -- to provide you a service -- you required us to provide -- and we can’t really explain where the money is -- nor can we tell you when, -- if ever we will deliver that service, but we need to continue to collect this fee to fund things we can’t explain directly to you, nor do we want to, but also you need just trust us that someday, we can’t say when, we will do something that may move us towards a possible unknown solution.”

All hand wringing and Monday-morning quarterbacking aside, as we stand here today we have cause to be guardedly optimistic - about the future of the Yucca Mountain program – with the caveat that the clock is clearly clicking and the ball is in play on the sixteen blocks from the White House to the Forrestal Building to the Capitol.

There are number of sound reasons for this conclusion on many fronts:

**Money** – if we can enact a comprehensive “funding fix” that ensures full appropriation of the \$750M collected annual from nuclear energy consumers, this amount – when coupled with a minimal \$300M annually from the defense waste fund, which is a real figure, would provide a billion dollars annually for construction and operation. And, of course, if we combined with the \$13 billion plus corpus of the nuclear waste fund, there is sufficient money to complete the promised and assigned commitment we have been promise by our government through the life of the nuclear age. Immaterial of the monies owed by both Republican and Democratic Administration, enough monies are raised each and every year to complete this project in this decade. But, we cannot continue to waste resources and time by inaction.

**Radiation Protection Standard** – Enactment of a new radiation protection standard is a key piece of this puzzle and the Environmental Protection Agency has given every indication that they’re serious about promulgating a new standard as early as late this year or early in 2006. While any post-ten thousand-year

standard is daunting, I think we can applaud the EPA's seriousness of purpose and efficiency in moving forward on this key ingredient for any license submittal.

**Transportation readiness & waste acceptance preparedness** – There's not a lot to say here – the exemplary and outstanding safety record of millions of miles and thousands of shipments speaks loud and clear. Make no mistake, this is not a movie, high-level radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuels has<sup>u</sup> been - can be and will be safely shipped across this great nation with the American people fully assured they are safe and secured from fear mongers cries of impending horrors. Our government and Utilities have demonstrated that they can safely package spent fuel and that they are prepared for any transport campaign scenario.

**Licensing** – The successful licensing of the Private Fuel Storage facility is a key leading indicator that demonstrates that an away from reactor facility – essentially most of the key components of the initial Yucca Mountain surface facility -- can be licensed for 40 years for storage 40,000 metric tons of fuel. Clearly the NRC is up-to-the-job and has identified the issues and resources to move forward on an application when a new, now-in-progress DOE licensing strategy unfolds.

**Accountability and Quality** – The US Geologic Survey incident was unfortunate but much needed wake-up call for the OCRWM program. We can be encouraged that Secretary Bodman has taken this quality issue and the lack of accountability of the program seriously. He has personally involved himself, -- put new management in place, - and conducted a top-to-bottom review. The end result will be a stronger program, improved culture and the turning of the corner on this issue this Fall or Winter.

There, in short, we are guardedly optimistic about the future of the Yucca Mountain project. We believe there is the collective leadership at the White House, the Department and Energy and the Congress for the enactment of a comprehensive funding fix, for the promulgation of a final radiation protection standard and for the successful implementation of licensing and development requirements for the Yucca Mountain Project. We do not know if there is the collective will with national disasters and distractions. We need to be reassured this great nation can be multi-tasked and can address a wide range of issues with the commitment and dedication of keeping faith with the American public in promises made.

It is clear that there are compelling national security, energy security and economic considerations that strongly warrant expeditious completion of the Yucca Mountain project as mandated by the Nuclear Waste Policy Act. Electric utility consumers have invested billions of dollars to this end. Time and time again – in 1982, 1987, 1992 and in 2002 – the various Congresses have s overwhelming reaffirmed its commitment to a national federal facility for spent fuel and high-level radioactive waste. We must have the resolve to move forward and we can hope that the collective wisdom and energy of this Summit can be a catalyst for this nation to meet its responsibility for the safe, secure stewardship of its 40 year use of civilian nuclear energy and post-World War II national security infrastructure that has kept the world safe and America to remain the lone superpower, not only militarily, but economically as well.

The YMTF believes that the Yucca Mountain project is a pro American proposal. We believe the Yucca Mountain project needs to be a pro Nevada proposal as well. We believe Nye County and local governments needs have to be addressed and that the U.S. Government must extend a responsible pro-Nevada proposal in exchange for the utilization of the Federal lands in their State in addressing this national discussion.

Thank you for your attention.