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October 19, 1988

The Honorable John S. Herrington
Secretary of Energy
Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Mr. Secretary:

For more than 30 years, the state of Idaho has eagerly played a major role in the nation's nuclear energy program. The Idaho National Engineering Laboratory has been a world leader in nuclear reactor research, safety and development. Thousands of talented and dedicated Idaho people have put INEL on the map as a tremendous contributor to the nation's nuclear program. We take great pride in that role and in the fact that we have consistently provided leadership and support.

As good citizens, we Idahoans have been willing for almost 20 years to do our part to facilitate the "temporary" storage of low-level and transuranic waste generated at a number of sites in the United States. Our "temporary" storage has now grown to 2.4 million cubic feet of material stored in 120,000 drums and 11,000 boxes. We have willingly accepted this waste over the years with the full understanding that it would be transferred to a permanent storage facility elsewhere. In fact, in 1973, I was promised that the waste would be moved out of Idaho "within 10 years." Obviously, that deadline was not met.

Now we are told there will be more delays, despite the fact that we have been planning for several years now to begin shipping Idaho stored waste this very month to the Department of Energy's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) near Carlsbad, New Mexico.

I visited the WIPP site this week to tour the facility and to receive assurances from DOE that the facility would soon be operational and able to accept waste now stored in Idaho and elsewhere. Mr. Secretary, DOE officials in New Mexico were unable to give me a firm date for WIPP start-up. They concede that, even under an optimistic time schedule, the opening could still be several months away. This answer is simply unacceptable.

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I am today notifying you and the appropriate state officials in Idaho that, from this date, the state of Idaho will no longer accept nuclear waste shipments from any source outside of Idaho for storage at the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory.

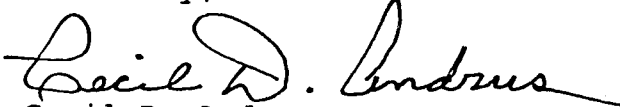
In the interest of doing our part as good citizens, we have tolerated delay after delay. We have accepted too many promises that simply have not been kept. We must have a solution that moves waste from Idaho. I must emphasize that officials at INEL have been consistent in their support for removing waste from that facility. This problem is not of their making, even though they have diligently attempted to find a resolution.

I do not need to remind you that this issue is of national importance. It is an issue that deserves the most urgent attention of the Department of Energy and the Congress of the United States. I urge you to immediately commence administrative land withdrawal proceedings that will facilitate the opening of WIPP. Congress failed to meet the test, and I believe it is unrealistic to assume it will change that negative posture in the near future.

Having visited southeastern New Mexico, I am very impressed with the enthusiastic support of local residents for the early opening of the WIPP site. I am convinced that the facility -- thanks to the expenditure of nearly a billion dollars in public funds and following exhaustive engineering and environmental preparation -- is the proper storage site for the nation's low-level and transuranic waste. In fact, if such waste cannot be safely stored at WIPP, I doubt it can be safely stored anywhere.

We must move ahead to open the facility. I urge your most immediate attention directed toward a resolution of this issue. Idaho has done its part for almost two decades; now others must act responsibly.

Sincerely,


Cecil D. Andrus
Governor

CDA/mjp