



United States Nuclear Industry Council
1317 F Street NW Washington, DC 20004

August 14, 2020

Via Email

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

Re: USNIC response to Governor Lujan Grisham of New Mexico - July 28, 2020 letter to you concerning the proposed consolidated interim storage facility (CISF) for spent nuclear fuel in New Mexico.

Dear President Trump:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Industry Council (USNIC), I am writing in response to a letter written to you on July 28, 2020, by Governor Lujan Grisham of New Mexico concerning the proposed consolidated interim storage facility (CISF) for spent nuclear fuel in New Mexico.

Although we understand that the siting of proposed nuclear waste storage and disposal facilities has caused state and local officials to raise issues, USNIC wants to ensure that you consider these issues in light of the outstanding safety record of the U.S. nuclear industry. The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and the U.S. Department of Transportation are properly charged, respectively, with evaluating the environmental and safety aspects of siting of both permanent and interim facilities for the storage of spent nuclear fuel, as well the safety of the transportation of spent nuclear fuel. Indeed, the NRC is currently engaged in safety and environmental impact assessments for the interim storage facilities in New Mexico and Texas that are the subject of Governor Lujan Grisham's stated concerns. These NRC proceedings are critical in objectively evaluating many of the concerns that Governor Lujan Grisham raises and should be completed promptly and without further delay.

It is important to note that the NRC's draft generic environmental impact statement (GEIS) findings concerning these sites conclude that the proposed facility in New Mexico poses minimum risk to the surrounding population and to the environment. Such findings are important both to the people of New Mexico and Texas, and also to ensuring the integrity of the established process for completing a final study that either validates or otherwise makes determinations on these initial findings. Delay serves no purpose at this point other than to frustrate the process of expert evaluation of the projects.

Accordingly, USNIC has filed comments with the NRC supporting the NRC's draft GEIS on the proposed New Mexico CISF. As we made clear in our comments, USNIC fully supports the NRC's assessment process and its findings of the proposed New Mexico CISF.

As to the safety record of the modern U.S. nuclear industry, we simply point to facts, not just opinions, to support our presentation of a record in which we take pride. Our outstanding modern record of safety in terms of nuclear plant operations and spent fuel storage and transportation, is unquestionably the best in the world. Consider that, today the U.S. nuclear industry safely operates ninety-five U.S. nuclear plants, around the clock, that provide over nineteen percent of the nation's electricity in a safe and reliable manner. All of this energy production is emissions free. In addition, the U.S. nuclear industry operates over seventy-three separate interim storage facilities, and has transported nuclear materials, including spent nuclear fuel, safely across the U.S. and internationally for decades. For example, the U.S. Navy has completed some 850 spent nuclear fuel shipments totaling over 1.6 million miles of transport. Since the early 1960's, there have been over 1,300 safe shipments of commercial spent nuclear fuel in the United States.

Significantly, Governor Lujan Grisham makes no mention that the U.S. Department of Energy has transported nearly 12,000 shipments of transuranic waste to the Waste Isolation Pilot Project (WIPP) in New Mexico since 1999 without incident. In addition, according to a study prepared for the U.S. Department of Energy, more than 25,000 shipments of spent nuclear fuel were made worldwide between 1962 and 2016 by land, sea and air. These transport shipments have been made without any injuries or deaths resulting from a release of radiation. Any objective evaluation of the history of handling and transportation of nuclear material demonstrates a sterling record of safety.

I would be remiss if I did not make clear that USNIC appreciates and supports your Administration's important efforts to revitalize the nuclear industry. As outlined in the recent Interagency Report on "Restoring America's Competitive Nuclear Energy Advantage: A Strategy to Assure U.S. National Security," the United States has fallen woefully behind many of the foreign industrial powers around the globe in our development and deployment of peaceful nuclear energy projects. As further highlighted in the report, and as you, Mr. President, have even further clarified, this is an area of grave national security concern. Accordingly, we look forward to the timely implementation of the report's important recommendations, and in doing what we at USNIC can do to regain America's standing as number one in the nuclear energy arena.

Of course, the development and deployment of nuclear energy facilities on the front end of the nuclear fuel cycle is of great importance but so too, as the main subject of this letter illustrates, is the importance of the backend. Although not included as a specific recommendation in the Interagency Report, USNIC believes that making progress on the backend of the nuclear fuel cycle is an important and urgent priority in terms of revitalizing the U.S. nuclear industry. That is in part why we share Governor Lujan Grisham's concern regarding the lack of a permanent geologic repository.

Although we recognize the political hurdles that obstruct proceeding with the Yucca Mountain evaluation, USNIC strongly believes that the NRC proceeding to determine the safety of the proposed Yucca Mountain geologic repository should be completed without further delay. U.S. independent agency proceedings, such as NRC's reviews of the proposed consolidated storage facilities in New Mexico and Texas as well as the Yucca Mountain repository project should continue according to the law and procedures in place in order to provide facts about these facilities as opposed to speculation.

Lastly, I and other members of USNIC stand ready to meet with you and your representatives to share more information about the about the safety record of our industry and the important role we play in our national security.

Thank you for your attention to these important matters.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C.H. Albright, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

C.H. Albright, Jr.
President & CEO
U.S. Nuclear Industry Council &
U.S. Under Secretary of Energy (2006-2008)