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| **For Immediate Release:** | **Contact:** Megan Taylor |
| September 6, 2018 | 202-224-6244 |

**Heller Pushes Back with Strong Opposition to the Energy Department’s Proposal to Store Plutonium at the Nevada National Security Site***Heller Urges DOE Secretary to Conduct a Full Environmental Impact Analysis Prior to Any Further Action*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) today expressed his strong opposition to the U.S. Department of Energy’s (DOE) proposal to store weapons-grade plutonium at the Device Assembly Facility at the Nevada National Security Site, and he urged DOE Secretary Rick Perry to conduct a full environmental impact analysis before the DOE moves forward with any further action. The Device Assembly Facility is located approximately 90 miles from Las Vegas, Nevada, the entertainment capital of the world that welcomes more than 40 million visitors annually, generates billions of dollars in revenue each year for the state, and supports over 300,000 tourism-related jobs.

This proposed action is the direct result of DOE and the National Nuclear Security Administration’s (NNSA) failure to meet the deadline to complete construction on the Mixed Oxide (MOX) Fuel Fabrication Facility in South Carolina. On May 25, 2018, the U.S. District Court for the District of South Carolina issued a court order mandating the removal of one metric ton of plutonium from the DOE’s Savannah River Site.

In a letter to Secretary Perry, Heller specifically requested a full National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis to shed light on the proposal’s environmental impacts that would likely result from DOE’s proposed action. Heller stated that the agency’s desire to expeditiously pursue this proposal does not outweigh the rights of Nevadans, and he argued that it is inappropriate for DOE to even consider this proposal prior to providing the state of Nevada with all of the potential health, safety, and economic risks associated with shipping plutonium across the country to be stored right outside of Las Vegas.

“DOE should not move forward with its proposal to store weapons-grade plutonium in Nevada before fully evaluating the health, safety, and environmental impact that it would have on our state,” **said Heller.** “Not only does shipping up to one metric ton of plutonium across the country likely present risks to the Americans living along the proposed transportation routes, storing this type of material just a few miles outside of Las Vegas could threaten the health and safety of Nevadans and have a devastating effect on our state’s tourism economy. That is why I am strongly opposed to this proposal and am pressing DOE to conduct a full environmental impact analysis before moving forward with any further action.”

**The full text of Heller’s letter to Secretary Perry is available**[**HERE**](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/c6a3628f-a48f-4cab-98b1-3e6f4f14097d/Heller%20Letter%20to%20Secretary%20Perry_9.6.18.pdf)**and below:**

*I write today to express my strong opposition to the Department of Energy (DOE) proposal to store up to one metric ton of weapons-grade plutonium at the Nevada National Security Site (NNSS). Before any further action is taken, at minimum, I respectfully request that a full National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis be undertaken so that all affected parties, including the State of Nevada, can understand the true scope of the health and environmental impacts likely to result from this proposed action. DOE’s desire to expeditiously pursue this proposal does not outweigh the rights of Nevadans to be safe in their own backyard. I strongly believe that it is completely inappropriate to consider the proposal before Nevadans have the opportunity to fully understand the potential health, safety, and economic risks it presents should DOE move forward with storing this material at NNSS.*

*As you know, this proposed action comes as a direct result of a district court order mandating the removal of one ton of plutonium from DOE’s Savannah River Site, located in South Carolina. Because DOE and the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) failed to take necessary action and complete the Mixed Oxide (MOX) Fuel Fabrication Facility in a timely manner, they now seek to fix their first wrong by committing a second one, proposing to ship large amounts of highly enriched defense-grade plutonium from the Savannah River Site across the entire country to the Device Assembly Facility at NNSS, near Las Vegas. Rather than provide any economic benefit to the State of Nevada, DOE and NNSA merely plan to move these dangerous defense materials in and out of the State and force Nevadans to bear the health and safety risks of this unreasonable and unnecessary transportation and storage. In addition, to add insult to injury, it appears likely that should DOE move forward with this proposal, NNSS will also receive low-grade nuclear waste resulting from the production of new nuclear pits to expand the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile.*

*Given the unresolved health and safety concerns and DOE’s failure to conduct a necessary and proper environmental review, I am strongly opposed to this proposal. I once again respectfully urge you to conduct a full NEPA analysis prior to any further action being taken. DOE’s desire to move forward rapidly, something it did not do with respect to the South Carolina MOX facility, does not eliminate the need to follow established safety protocols to examine the health and safety risks of this project. Thank you for your timely attention to this request, and I look forward to receiving a reply to my letter no later than September 20, 2018.*

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