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**Heller Highlights His Fight Against Yucca Mountain Ahead of Perry’s Testimony to Senate Energy Committee**

***Heller: Perry Should Explain Costs To Taxpayers***

**Washington, D.C. –** U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) today expressed his staunch opposition to the Administration’s budget proposal to restart the licensing activities at the Yucca Mountain nuclear repository in a statement to U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chairwoman Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Ranking Member Maria Cantwell (D-WA) ahead of Department of Energy (DOE) Secretary Rick Perry’s testimony before the Committee.

“I stand with the state of Nevada in staunch opposition to any attempt to restart the repository licensing process, and I strongly urge you not to fund the Administration’s request.  Secretary Perry has referred to a “moral and national security obligation,” and I believe that fighting for Nevada against Yucca Mountain is mine,” **Heller wrote.**

Yesterday, [Heller reiterated his opposition](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=6E1CC11F-3413-4DCE-9E13-632E509919A7) to the nuclear repository to U.S. Senate Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and Ranking Member Diane Feinstein (D-CA).

**The letter reads in full below:**

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski

Chairman

Senate Committee on Energy and

Natural Resources

304 Dirksen Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  Ranking Member

Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

304 Dirksen Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510

*Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Cantwell:*

*I write today to express my vehement opposition to the Administration’s request for $120 million in the Department of Energy’s (DOE’s) fiscal year 2018 budget to be in part utilized to restart licensing activities at the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository.  I strongly believe that our nation cannot fully move forward with viable sustainable solutions for spent nuclear fuel and defense high-level waste without moving past Yucca Mountain.  The Administration’s request simply perpetuates a decades-long fight that has been strongly opposed by Nevadans from the state, done little to solve our nation’s waste problem, and wasted billions of U.S. taxpayer dollars.*

*Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Cantwell, I commend your leadership in working to address our nation’s long-term nuclear waste problem through introducing bipartisan, comprehensive legislation.  I believe you have taken an important step forward in finding a solution, and I stand ready to partner with you on furthering your efforts with respect to consent-based siting.  Together, I believe that we can find a path forward on what I would argue is one of our nation’s most critically important issues not only to diversifying our energy portfolio but to that of Nevada and respecting the rights of all states to have the ability to object to storing high-level nuclear waste.*

*As I have stated to Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Feinstein with the Energy and Water Senate Appropriations Subcommittee, the Administration purports that this budget request will “address nuclear waste, enhance national security, and reduce future taxpayer burden,” yet in practice, it will do the exact opposite.  Governor Sandoval has made clear the state of Nevada will contest over 200 elements of any license application, which will take years to resolve and cost the federal government billions of dollars.  This is in addition to the DOE’s estimates that an additional $82 billion would be needed to license, litigate, build, operate, decommission, and eventually close Yucca Mountain.  With respect to what has already been spent on the repository, this adds up to more than $96 billion for the total system life cycle cost of the project.*

*It is clear that U.S. taxpayer dollars would be better spent identifying viable alternatives for the long-term storage of nuclear waste in areas that are willing to house it.  In fact, in 2012, DOE cost estimates show that all other costs being equal, walking away from Yucca Mountain and starting with a new repository site in a deep salt bed or a deep shale formation could save between $12 billion and $27 billion over the life of the repository.  Before Congress spends any more U.S. taxpayer money on Yucca Mountain, I strongly urge you to ask Secretary Perry as he testifies before your committee to explain what the Department has learned about repository costs in its previous studies.  Furthermore, I believe we need new cost studies on geologic disposal in repositories, studies that include the lessons learned from recent progress with repositories in Europe.*

*Moreover, I am deeply troubled by recent comments made by Secretary Perry stating that the Nevada National Security Test Site could be an option for temporary storage of high-level nuclear waste.  Not only do I believe that this comment is irresponsible, I also remain concerned about the legality of such actions by the Department.  As I have repeatedly expressed to the Secretary, Nevada will not be forced against its will to shoulder the burden of housing our nation’s nuclear waste.*

*The only viable solution to our nation’s long-term nuclear waste problem is one that is rooted in consent.  I stand behind the DOE’s 2005 initiatives regarding consent-based siting as a result of the Blue Ribbon Commission on America’s Nuclear Future.  This open process ensures all Americans have a meaningful voice if their community is being considered for a future nuclear waste repository.  I strongly believe that Secretary Perry should focus his efforts on this worthwhile initiative instead of making Nevada our nation’s nuclear waste dump.*

*I stand with the state of Nevada in staunch opposition to any attempt to restart the repository licensing process, and I strongly urge you not to fund the Administration’s request.  Secretary Perry has referred to a “moral and national security obligation,” and I believe that fighting for Nevada against Yucca Mountain is mine.  Moreover, I encourage you to devote resources towards DOE’s consent-based siting initiative for the storage and disposal of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste. Thank you for your attention to this important request.*

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