

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **For Immediate Release:** | **Contact:**Megan Taylor |
| April 25, 2018 | 202-224-6244 |

**Heller to Senate Panel: No Funds for Yucca Mountain**

**WASHINGTON -**U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) today urged the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee Energy and Water Development Subcommittee to not fund the Trump Administration’s fiscal year 2019 budget request of $48 million for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to work on the proposed Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository.

Heller successfully blocked funding to help restart Yucca mountain in the recently-signed fiscal year 2018 omnibus measure. Thanks to Heller’s efforts the omnibus package excluded [$150 million requested by the Department of Energy (DOE) and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to support and fund licensing activities at the Yucca Mountain nuclear repository](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=526CDC21-D0DB-40ED-AF19-7A3A737E9B98).

In a [letter submitted today to Subcommittee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and Ranking Member Dianne Feinstein (D-CA)](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/61a84717-94bb-4a58-8bd9-b33220938991/04242018%20Heller%20Letter%20Re%202019%20NRC%20Approps.pdf), Heller expressed his strong opposition to funding the NRC and said he remains staunchly opposed to any federal efforts to revive Yucca Mountain.

“Beyond the breach of state sovereignty and the disregard for the will of the local population, the Yucca Mountain proposal poses significant health and safety risks and potentially catastrophic financial risks that must be addressed before – and not after – the proposal moves forward should it move forward at all,” **wrote Heller.** “To date, however, Nevadans have not received any assurances from the NRC that their concerns will receive the process and consideration they are due under existing law. In fact, in my recent correspondence with NRC Chairman Svinicki, I have yet to receive a single commitment that the Commission will so much as implement procedural safeguards, like local hearings and local adjudication, to ensure parties directly affected by the proposal have the opportunity to air their concerns and have them considered in an open and reasonably close forum.”

Heller has repeatedly expressed Nevada’s strong opposition to the failed Yucca Mountain project to Administration officials as well as his colleagues who are members of the committees of jurisdiction. Even though the U.S. House of Representatives [advanced](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=8EF79DF1-BC92-4F29-88BC-A9FF5CD73120) funding aimed at jumpstarting Yucca Mountain, Heller was able to ensure that the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee [did not include any funding for the project in its Energy and Water Appropriations Bill](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=691E36A0-8C66-4C9F-B730-01AACAEA879A). In March, it was [reported](https://www.politicopro.com/energy/whiteboard/2018/03/simpson-no-go-from-senate-on-yucca-funding-in-omnibus-748331) that the Chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives Energy and Water Development Appropriations Subcommittee signaled that the spending package would not include Yucca Mountain because of objection from the U.S. Senate.

**The**[**letter**](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/61a84717-94bb-4a58-8bd9-b33220938991/04242018%20Heller%20Letter%20Re%202019%20NRC%20Approps.pdf)**reads in full:**

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Feinstein:

I write today to express my strong opposition to the Administration’s request for $48 million in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission’s (NRC’s) fiscal year (FY) 2019 budget to support licensing activities at the proposed Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository. The Administration’s FY 2019 budget includes this request despite Congress’ continuous refusal to fund this fiscally reckless and ill-considered proposal, a position that this Committee recently reiterated in the FY 2018 omnibus spending bill. Under your leadership, Yucca Mountain has not been funded, something for which I commend you, and I would respectfully request the same result as you consider NRC funding for the coming fiscal year.

As you know, I firmly believe our nation cannot progress toward achieving viable and sustainable solutions for spent nuclear fuel and defense high-level waste without first abandoning Yucca Mountain. We all recognize that nuclear power is a necessary part of a stable and secure all-of-the-above energy strategy, and with nuclear energy comes the need to properly store spent nuclear fuel. However, this storage need does not outweigh the rights of states to have a say in the matter, and that is why I am ready to work with you, Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Feinstein, members of this Committee, and Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chairman Murkowski to implement consent-based siting. I strongly believe that consent-based siting represents the best of both worlds: It provides a viable means of addressing our nation’s nuclear waste problem while respecting the sovereignty of states to object to becoming a nuclear waste dump.

Beyond the breach of state sovereignty and the disregard for the will of the local population, the Yucca Mountain proposal poses significant health and safety risks and potentially catastrophic financial risks that must be addressed before – and not after – the proposal moves forward should it move forward at all. To date, however, Nevadans have not received any assurances from the NRC that their concerns will receive the process and consideration they are due under existing law. In fact, in my recent correspondence with NRC Chairman Svinicki, I have yet to receive a single commitment that the Commission will so much as implement procedural safeguards, like local hearings and local adjudication, to ensure parties directly affected by the proposal have the opportunity to air their concerns and have them considered in an open and reasonably close forum.

Because of these outstanding and unresolved concerns, I continue to stand with the State of Nevada in its strong opposition to restarting licensing activities at the Yucca Mountain repository. I strongly urge you not to fund the Administration’s request, and I yet again ask you to dedicate resources to the Department of Energy’s consent-based siting initiative for the storage and disposal of nuclear waste. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

###

