

April 26, 2001

Mr. Clinton Bastin
Chemical Engineer
987 Viscount Court
Avondale Estates, GA 30002

SUBJECT: STUDY OF REPROCESSING CHEMICAL SEPARATION OF ENERGY USABLE
MATERIALS FROM NUCLEAR WASTES IN SPENT NUCLEAR FUELS

Dear Mr. Bastin:

In a letter dated March 15, 2001, to Chairman Meserve of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), you requested NRC's support of Senator Domenici's recent proposal for a study of nuclear materials reprocessing. Your letter has been referred to me on behalf of Chairman Meserve.

I read with interest the information you provided in support of the safe and secure use of reprocessing and fast neutron reactor technology. As an independent agency established by the U.S. Congress under the Energy Reorganization Act of 1974, NRC's primary mandate is to ensure adequate protection of the public health and safety in the regulation of commercial uses of nuclear materials. Responsibility for the development or promotion of nuclear energy technologies is currently assigned to the Department of Energy. Thus, as a matter of legislative mandate, the NRC can not promote specific nuclear technologies outside of the regulatory authority of the agency. Clearly, if there were a significant policy shift in favor of reprocessing commercial nuclear fuel and transmutation of actinide products using fast neutron reactors, it should be supported by careful consideration of safety, environmental, safeguards, economical and other societal impacts of such a shift. The study proposed by Senator Domenici may be useful in this regard.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Martin J. Virgilio, Director
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards

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