

TESTIMONY OF  
LYNDA L. BROTHERS  
STATE OF WASHINGTON  
CHAIR  
NORTHWEST INTERSTATE COMPACT ON  
LOW-LEVEL RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT

BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON INTERIOR AND INSULAR AFFAIRS  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 7, 1985

8506060483 850419  
PDR WASTE  
WM-10 PDR

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the invitation to speak today. My name is Lynda L. Brothers and I am pleased to represent Governor Booth Gardner of the state of Washington. We welcome the opportunity to reiterate our thoughts and our concerns pertaining to the sound management of the nation's low-level radioactive wastes. Washington is the host state for the disposal site and chair for the Northwest Interstate Compact on Low-Level Radioactive Waste Management--therefore, today I will be discussing interests and activities of both the state of Washington and the Northwest Compact.

The first point I'd like to address is the need for ratification of the pending compacts. As the recipients of over 50 percent of the nation's low-level radioactive wastes disposed of at commercial sites, Washington has a vital interest in securing a safe and equitable national disposal system. To achieve this end, there is an urgent need for congressional ratification of the pending compacts. Washington's newly elected Governor Booth Gardner fully supports the intent and purpose of the 1980 Low-Level Radioactive Waste Policy Act, and supports any reasonable amendments to the Act or other alternatives that will enhance the probability of congressional ratification. The state of Washington is willing to cooperate fully and consider all reasonable alternatives.

The state of Washington has remained reasonable and patient for a number of years on this issue. Since passage of the Act in 1980, the state of Washington and the Northwest Compact have put tremendous efforts into compliance with the intent and purposes of the Low-Level Radioactive Waste Policy Act. First, the Northwest Interstate Compact was created and adopted by the states in 1981, the first compact to be established in the nation. The seven member states include Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Utah and Washington.

The Northwest Compact was formally introduced in Congress in the fall of 1982 and a field hearing convened in November 1982 by the Senate Judiciary Committee. The Compact was reintroduced in both houses in January, 1983. On January 31, 1985, the Northwest Compact was once again reintroduced in the House and Senate.

Second, Washington State representatives have been and will continue to participate in the ongoing National Governors' Association organized efforts of various states, providing technical and other input to discussions of the proposed amendments to the Low-Level Radioactive Waste Policy Act. At the present time, we are optimistic that those efforts are close to achieving a widely acceptable compromise.

The Low-Level Radioactive Waste Policy Act establishes January 1, 1986 as the date on which compacts could exclude out-of-region wastes. Without ratification of compacts, the act becomes meaningless on that date and management of the disposal site would presumably be handled by the governor. We believe that the Udall amendments amend the Act so that it will remain viable and also permit immediate ratification of the pending compacts.

Now, I'd like to address the second major issue of this hearing, HR.1083, the proposed amendments to the Low-Level Radioactive Waste Policy Act. The Amendments extend the exclusionary date from January 1, 1986 to January 1, 1993. As a state hosting a disposal site that receives over 50% of the nation's wastes in a region that only produces 4%, we are not pleased with that extension. We also recognize that the amendments require us to extend offers to other regions that may result in interregional agreements for some level of continued access to the site. However, we support these amendments in

general, and can abide by that extension, on the condition that the compact is ratified and that the volumes of wastes coming to Washington are reduced. I'd like to emphasize the need to treat these amendments and the pending compacts as an inseparable package.

We believe that the present amendments, with some minor technical changes, provide an acceptable framework for ratification of the compacts. Volume reduction is achieved by establishment of a national cap for disposal, while at the same time the goals of states and regions without disposal sites are met.

Washington has accepted for disposal the greatest share of the nation's low-level wastes, and in so doing, our citizens have had to bear an undue national burden of increased risk to public and environmental safety. We are firmly committed, as Governor Gardner recently emphasized to the winter meeting of the National Governors' Association, to a reduction in volume of wastes coming to Washington. HR1083 helps accomplish that aim by establishing a reasonable formula and schedule for development of other disposal sites. We will consider whatever combination of on-site storage, volume reduction at the source, increased surcharges and impetus for siting new disposal sites that represent a viable compromise. We are willing to accept these amendments, including the extension from January 1, 1986 to January 1, 1993, conditional upon approval of the pending compacts. As more regions develop disposal sites, the wastes disposed there should be directly subtracted from the presently operating disposal sites.

If all of the ongoing congressional efforts fail to result in ratification of the compact, Governor Gardner has stated his intent to do whatever is necessary to protect the interests of the state of Washington. If compacts are not ratified,

Washington will probably not wait until 1993 to reduce or exclude extra-regional waste volumes. Currently there are bills before the Washington State Legislature requiring volume reduction beginning in 1985. Governor Gardner is considering increasing the costs of disposal in our state. Volume reduction, fee and surcharge increases could be accomplished without burdening interstate commerce.

In summary, I would like to re-emphasize that the state of Washington will continue to work on problems that have allegedly delayed congressional action on the compacts and which threaten a sound and reasonable national disposal system. However, as a state, we cannot continue to accept the majority of the nation's low-level radioactive wastes.

I want to thank the Chairman and the Committee for your interest and attention. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.