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Transfer of Very Low-Level Waste to Exempt Persons for Disposal

Comment On: NRC-2020-0065-0001

Transfer of Very Low-Level Waste to Exempt Persons for Disposal

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General Comment

This comment is regarding the change proposed by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission that would allow radioactive waste to be dumped into regular landfills and hazardous waste sites, rather than radioactive waste storage facilities. The nuclear industry has been pushing for such a change since the 1980s, and the NRC has, reprehensibly, decided to try to sneak this through during the COVID-19 public health crisis. I find this timing opportunistic and cowardly. Attempting to line the nuclear industry's pockets in a way that will most assuredly undermine public health in the middle of the worst public health crisis in a century is frankly unbelievable.

Safe disposal of nuclear waste has always been a complicated and costly proposition. Anyone who has followed these issues is well aware of this conundrum. But it is not a football that we can just keep punting down the road. Why not look for solutions that are scientifically and socially acceptable? Economics cannot take precedence over public health. This new proposal may save the nuclear industry money, but the ethics and legality of the proposal are beyond questionable. Up to now, radioactive waste storage sites and transport have had long term monitoring and security protocols, but who will secure and monitor this waste in an ordinary landfill? And how will it be ensured that this waste does not get out into the land, air and water of surrounding communities? Until these questions have satisfactory answers, the NRC and the nuclear industry need to go back to the drawing board.

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