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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
 ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES EDO R/F

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6150

September 19, 1996

The Honorable Shirley Ann Jackson
 Chairman
 Nuclear Regulatory Commission
 Washington, DC 20555

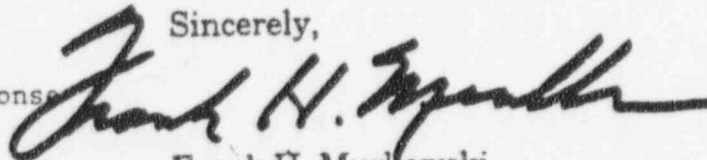
Dear Chairman Jackson:

As you know, the Senate Energy Committee is very interested in resolving the issues surrounding the Ward Valley low-level waste facility. Uses of radioactive materials provide many benefits for our citizens including playing a critical role in finding cures for cancer and other life threatening diseases. Providing for safe disposal of low level waste is responsible public policy. One option being considered to resolve the current impasse on transfer of federal lands to California involves the Commission. Under this option the Commission would be requested to conduct an expedited review of the Department of the Interior's health, safety and related environmental questions for the Ward Valley site.

Specifically, the Department of the Interior would identify and forward its remaining radiological health and safety and related environmental questions to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission within 30 days of enacting legislation. The NRC would then undertake an expedited review of these questions, drawing upon the substantial record created by the State of California, the National Academy of Sciences report, and input received through the Interior Department's recently completed SEIS Scoping Process. By March 1, 1997, the NRC would conclude its review and issue a finding of whether the Commission believes current provisions adequately protect public health and safety.

I believe relying on the recommendations of the agency with primary responsibility for regulating commercial uses and disposal of radioactive material makes sense. It is important for Congress to know if there are any reasons that the Commission and its staff would be unable to comply with such a request, if so directed in legislation. Since little time remains in this legislative session, I would appreciate an expedited response by Monday, September 30, if possible. Should you have any questions about this request, please contact me or David Garman of my staff at (202) 224-8115.

Sincerely,



Frank H. Murkowski
 Chairman

9/23...To OGC/EDO to Prepare Response
 for Chairman's Signature...
 Date due Comm: Sept 26...Cpy to:
 Chairman, Comrs, RF, OCA....96-1009

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 PDR COMMS NRCC
 CORRESPONDENCE PDR