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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Commerce
Room 2125, Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515–6115

July 20, 2000

JUL 26 2000

Dr. Debra S. Knopman
Board Member
U.S. Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board
2300 Clarendon Boulevard
Suite 1300
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Dr. Knopman:

I am writing to thank you for appearing before the Subcommittee on Energy and Power on June 23, 2000, to present testimony on the status of the Department of energy (DOE) program to develop a permanent geologic repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada for spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste. Your testimony allowed the Subcommittee Members to gain a better understanding of this extremely important issue.

Pursuant to the Chair's order of June 23, 2000, the record of the Subcommittee's hearing remains open to permit Members to submit questions to witnesses in writing. Attached you will find questions submitted by Members of the Subcommittee. I would appreciate it if you could respond to these questions in writing no later than the close of business on August 18, 2000 in order to facilitate the printing of the hearing record.

Thank you again for your time and effort in preparing and delivering testimony before the Subcommittee.

Sincerely,

Joe Barton

Joe Barton
Chairman
Subcommittee on Energy and Power

Attachment

## QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD FROM MR. BARTON FOR NWTRB

1. Is the Technical Review Board concerned that funding constraints are causing DOE to postpone or skip critical technical analyses necessary to support the site recommendation and licensing decisions? If so, please identify the specific areas that are not being addressed adequately by DOE.

2. Is it correct that the Technical Review Board is concerned that DOE is not paying enough attention to the uncertainties inherent in the repository's long-term performance, especially with respect to the "hot" repository design?

3. How would the Board suggest that DOE should take these uncertainties into account -- is this a matter of DOE actually changing its repository design, or merely a matter of presenting this uncertainty information to the decision-makers?

4. When does the decision on hot versus cool repository design have to made? Can DOE leave this decision open into the licensing phase?

5. A recent GAO report on radiation standards suggested that the cooler repository design favored by the Board could add $ 2 billion to the cost of the repository. What is the basis for that statement by GAO, and is that estimate correct?

6. Please identify any other outstanding technical issues with the repository design that, in the Board's view, are not being addressed adequately by DOE. Explain these concerns fully, and make recommendations on actions that DOE and the Congress should take to resolve these issues.