



UNITED STATES  
NUCLEAR WASTE TECHNICAL REVIEW BOARD

1100 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 910  
Arlington, VA 22209

September 30, 1993

The Honorable J. Bennett Johnston  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C 20510-6030

Dear Senator Johnston:

The Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board (the Board) would like to bring to your attention a potential problem with language related to the civilian radioactive waste management program in the Senate Appropriations Committee report accompanying the Energy and Water Development Appropriations bill. On page 128 of the report, the Committee states that it "...expects the Department to *adapt* existing NRC-licensed multipurpose container technologies in lieu of technology development..." This is a change from language in the House Committee report, which directs the DOE to "...*consider* existing canister technologies...."

The Board strongly endorses what appears to be the intent of the language, which is to encourage the evaluation of the benefits of a multipurpose container concept without "reinventing the wheel" We have for some time been urging the DOE to look at the advantages of developing a universal, or multipurpose container concept that could be used to transport, store, and dispose of spent fuel and have supported the DOE's efforts to vigorously pursue a concept they call the "multipurpose canister" or MPC However, the Board has strongly encouraged the DOE to complete necessary systemwide analyses, including looking at concepts used in other countries, before final design and procurement of any multipurpose container. We have some concern that a narrow interpretation of the Senate report language could lead the DOE to make decisions in the short term that could preclude more desirable options later on.

For example, although several private vendors are developing canisters that could be used to transport as well as store the spent fuel, current canister designs have been licensed by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) only for dry-cask storage *or* for transportation. Although license applications have been submitted by some vendors for a "dual-purpose" cask that could be used for storage and transportation, such a cask has not been licensed as of yet by the NRC.

The Board feels strongly that when considering any multipurpose container concept the DOE should evaluate its potential for transport, storage, *and* disposal of the spent fuel — not just transport and storage. Currently available technology has not addressed disposal, and the affects of disposal requirements on the multipurpose container design are not currently known.

As mentioned above the Board believes that the systemwide consequences of a potential container should be assessed before any container technology or design is selected. Premature acquisition and deployment of a specific design could lock in decisions and foreclose altenatives that might later be shown to be preferable.

The Board hopes that this information will be useful as you reconcile the language in the two versions of the bill. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to have your staff contact William D. Barnard, our executive director, at 703/235-4473.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter and for your continued leadership on issues related to the civilian radioactive waste management program.

Sincerely,



Dr. John Cantlon  
Chairman

cc:  
The Honorable Tom Bevill  
Secretary Hazel O'Leary