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COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

June 30, 2011

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The Honorable Ed Whitfield
Chairman
Subcommittee on Energy and Power
U.S. House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Whitfield:

I am writing to request that the Energy and Power Subcommittee conduct a follow up hearing on nuclear safety that, specifically, looks at the issue of handling the nation's nuclear waste, both in the short term and in the long term.

In light of recent events that have put some of the nation's nuclear facilities at risk, including the Las Conchas Fire, which continues to jeopardize thousands of barrels of nuclear waste stored above ground at the Los Alamos National Laboratory, I believe it is imperative that we examine the procedures and protocols for how the nation stores its nuclear byproducts. In addition to Los Alamos, there have been other recent events that have caused reason for concern as we witnessed threats to the Fort Calhoun and Cooper nuclear facilities, in Nebraska, due to flooding of the Missouri River.

While we have yet to hear reports of serious damage to any of the nation's nuclear power plants due to natural catastrophes, such as flooding and wildfires, we should take a more proactive role in examining where and how we store our nation's nuclear byproducts. Although previous hearings have dealt with overall nuclear safety, I believe an additional hearing focused solely on storing and disposing of nuclear waste will allow us to bring in the nation's top scientific experts to ensure that we have the best practices and procedures in place.

As someone who continues to monitor the circumstances on the ground in Japan as they work to prevent an epic release of nuclear gas, those of us vested with oversight responsibility over our nation's energy resources are duty bound to ensure that our nuclear facilities are secure. Conducting a hearing on this subject will not only provide us with the most accurate understanding of current safety measures, but a hearing will also allow us to modify current practices where necessary. The American people must be assured that we are actively monitoring the safety and security of all of our nuclear facilities.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. To follow up, please contact John Marshall on my staff at (202)225-4372 or JohnM@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

Bobby L. Rush
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and Power

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