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LON BURNAM
DISTRICT 90 • FORT WORTH

Chairman Wilson and Commission Members,

I thank you for this opportunity to comment. As one who serves on the Energy Resources Committee, and represents District 90, I felt compelled to comment so as to bring your attention to some problems that I have with the current proposals. My concerns largely center around two major issues: problems within the application itself, and a lack of publically available information.

Application problems:

The application required for the importation of irradiated hardware is generally quite vague. When we're talking about the importation of materials that can carry highly hazardous material on them, we need to ensure that the public is protected, and that the state knows what is coming into its borders for storage/use in facilities, and that accurate records are kept in the event of an accidental release.

Presently, the application process is lacking, in that the descriptions of irradiated hardware require very little detail. In our opinion, too little.

As an illustrative example, research clearly demonstrates that control rod blades have high levels of radiation, and the current forms don't ask about them directly (there is no requirement that equipment be inventoried or the potential radiation be laid out with specificity). We want the commission to make sure that it asks about these kinds of things. What kinds of radionuclides are present in these parts and pieces of equipment? How hot can these control rods get? How long can radioactive materials stay bound to these pieces of equipment, and what risks do they pose? These are important questions that will require the attention of the commission to ensure that material risks of contamination are known, and can be minimized as we progress forward.

It is not only hard for the public to comment appropriately when this distinction is blurred, but it is also hard for the Compact Commission to effectively do their job, since ensuring the availability of enough space for Texans to dispose of their radioactive waste is an important role of the Commission. By failing to exercise due diligence on what materials can be stored and which cannot be stored, the Commission may be causing harm on other law-abiding groups.

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Public reporting on request

Ideally, we would have a report that details the volumes and curies of waste disposed of at the site to that date. As I mentioned earlier, we believe that delineations of how much waste has been disposed of, and what classes the amounts fall into are vital information that the public has a right to have access to. We would also request that the manifests be given some form of tracking mechanism, to ensure that the manifests are accurately recording the materials that come in and out of the state, and what is coming in each batch.

Related to this, it is important to improve tracking systems so that a link can clearly be established and followed between the original application to import waste, the related files for the Compact Commission, and the disposal manifests from the site. Again, this is highly important in the world of public accountability. However, such systems are also important to ensure that the Compact Commission can adequately ensure capacity at the site for Texas and so that any radioactive leak can quickly be identified and dealt with, with correct information readily available for anyone that may be threatened by these activities.

More detail should be required in the import applications, since they are too vague at this time. There should be distinctions between the amount of Class B and Class C waste that applicants seek to dispose of at the Waste Control Specialists site. It is not only hard for the public to comment appropriately when this distinction is blurred, but it is also hard for the Compact Commission to effectively do their job, since ensuring the availability of enough space for Texas to dispose of their radioactive waste is an important role of the Commission.

The issue is one of public safety. Failure to accurately report the importation of potentially hazardous materials presents a material threat to the health of Texans, and we accordingly request that the compact will make the necessary changes for the best interests of the state.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lon Burnam".

Representative Lon Burnam (District 90)