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National survey by MIT shows most Americans oppose a nuclear waste dump planned for Yucca Mountain

CARSON CITY – A nationwide survey conducted by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology shows that the vast majority of Americans, like Nevadans, oppose the federal government's plans to store the nation's high-level nuclear waste at Nevada's Yucca Mountain.

The MIT survey, released this summer, found that "only 19 percent thought that Yucca Mountain should be used without further delays" to store the nation's nuclear waste and "another 25 percent would agree to its use only if the state of Nevada assents."

Bob Loux, executive director of Nevada's Agency for Nuclear Projects, said such research fuels Nevada's ongoing fight to stop the Yucca Mountain Project.

"This shows that most Americans now understand what Nevadans have known for decades – that the idea of transporting high-level nuclear waste across the country and burying it forever at Yucca Mountain is unsafe, a waste of billions of tax dollars and makes no sense," Loux said.

Loux also noted that the MIT survey discredits the federal government's entire rationale for continuing to pursue Yucca Mountain in the face of strong and persistent state opposition.

"People in other states do not support victimizing citizens elsewhere for the sake of political expediency," Loux said. "The survey shows that people are a lot more savvy and sophisticated on this issue than the feds and the nuclear industry think."

(more)

Nevada opposes plans to build a high-level nuclear waste dump at Yucca Mountain, some 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas. The state, along with Nevada's congressional delegation, supports storing nuclear waste at the reactor sites where it is generated. Annual statewide surveys commissioned by the state have shown that Nevadans have remained consistent in opposing the Yucca Mountain Project, with more than 75 percent in recent years stating they are against a project that state officials contend is "fatally flawed."

In fact, Loux said Nevada's opposition to Yucca Mountain has remained near or above 70 percent since the state began commissioning such surveys in 1989. He said Nevadans have been just as consistent in opposing any potential federal incentives or deals that would weaken the state's opposition, despite all the time and money the nuclear industry has spent pushing such arguments in Nevada.

The MIT survey of 1,200 people across the country was directed by political science professor Stephen Ansolabehere. Ansolabehere directed a similar survey in 2002. In the five years since the first survey, he found that public preferences have remained fairly stable. However, he noted that the percentage of Americans wishing to increase use of nuclear power has increased from 28 percent to 35 percent. He attributes that increase to concerns about global warming.

The survey's results were recently published by MIT's Center for Advanced Nuclear Energy Systems.

For a copy of the MIT survey and more information on Nevada's opposition to the Yucca Mountain Project, visit web.mit.edu/canes/ and www.state.nv.us/nucwaste/.

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