

# Spent Fuel—No Good News

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March 1, 2011

Washington, DC



## To get you in the mood . . .

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- The Fukushima tsunami and meltdown
- The Eurozone crisis
- The federal deficit
- The stock market 5-year performance
- The unemployment rate
- The foreclosure rates in Nevada, Florida, California, Arizona, Michigan

*Now we are ready to talk about spent nuclear fuel*

## Word association: Spent fuel policy means . . .

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- Blue Ribbon Commissions: many
- National Academy studies: too many to count
- Expensive
- Futile exercise
- Black hole
- Political football
- Litigators' paradise
- At-reactor storage

## A very brief history

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- 1940's: First large volumes of high level waste
- 1956: First NAS study on spent fuel
- 1957: First commercial spent fuel
- 1982: Congress: study diverse sites
- 1987: Congress: study only Yucca Mountain
- 1998: Yucca does not open: lawsuits filed
- 2002: Yucca found suitable for repository
- 2008: DOE files NRC licensing application
- 2008: Candidate Obama: Yucca is out

## History continued

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- 2010: ASLB denies DOE motion to withdraw Yucca application.
- 2011: D.C. Circuit: challenge to withdrawal not ripe
- 2011: Equally divided Commission affirms ASLB, but closes down licensing: no budget
- 2012: Blue Ribbon Commission final report
- 2012: D.C. Circuit to rule on DOE Yucca license application withdrawal
- 2040: A repository ? ? ? (if Yucca not revived)

# (Latest) Blue Ribbon Commission

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- Failure to build consensus was fatal flaw in spent fuel policy—need consent-based approach
- Pursue interim storage—preferably regional
- Pursue one or more geologic disposal sites in parallel
- Coordinate with corridor states
- Reprocessing not the answer
- Made international comparisons
- NAS should study deep borehole disposal—again
- Move the function out of DOE (away from politics)
- Funding—make available to Corp.

# Spent Fuel Costs

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- \$15 billion spent on Yucca characterization and licensing efforts
- \$16.2 billion in utility lawsuit judgments by 2020
- \$500 million/year in judgments post-2020
- Utility fees for spent fuel \$750 million/year

*More than 60 “Solyndras” and counting . . .*

# Spent Fuel Realities

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- 1987 NWPA approach a bad idea
- No perfect solution
  - Concept of “consent-based” siting has failed repeatedly
    - Whose consent? (ex. PFS)
    - Favorable governments can change with next election
    - BRC idealizes 25-year WIPP approval process
- No quick solution
  - Challenge to pursue both interim storage and disposal
  - Transportation plan alone could take a decade
- Policy paralysis is fodder for nuclear opponents
- Cost a serious policy driver



# Some Good Things in BRC Report...

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- Getting EPA to set standards in advance
- Focusing on transportation issues
- Doesn't exclude Yucca (could fall under “consent based” plan)
- Focuses on what you can do without legislative changes (e.g., start preparing for a CIS facility)
- Many of these recommendations DOE could do—but would need \$\$\$

# The View Going Forward

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- New legislation required unless Yucca revived—and maybe even if it is
  - May 2012, Oral argument in DC Circuit on Yucca Mountain case
- Industry support needs to be steadfast, realistic
  - Industry needs to take the long view—don't assert every claim, fight every fight
- Siting success will take money and more
- The Standard Contract will be revised
  - Spent fuel will almost certainly be the problem of new reactor owners, not the government's, until there is a clear solution

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