

Position Statement #22

Creation of an Independent Entity to Manage U.S. Used Nuclear Fuel

The United States has a large and growing inventory of commercial used nuclear fuel as well as government-owned used fuel and high-level radioactive waste. While it is possible to store the material safely for an indefinite period of time, long-term storage is not the ultimate solution. Responsible nuclear waste management requires an integrated approach involving some combination of on-site/centralized dry cask interim storage, nuclear fuel recycling, and emplacement of high-level wastes in a deep geologic disposal facility. A viable and durable waste management program will contribute to public confidence in nuclear energy as an important component of an energy future with reliable base load electricity generation and low greenhouse gas emissions.

Technologically proven solutions exist today that can safely and economically manage the flow of used nuclear fuel from the nation's current and planned nuclear power plants. As such, the so-called "nuclear waste problem" the United States faces is not the result of inadequate technical capabilities. Rather, it is largely a political problem, whereby parochial and ideological factions have successfully exploited U.S. legislative and administrative processes to prevent the U.S. Department of Energy from taking possession of used nuclear fuel.

In order to promote the primacy of scientifically sound and technically informed decision making in U.S. nuclear fuel cycle policy, the American Nuclear Society urges Congress and the Administration to consider the creation of an independent entity to oversee management of the current and expected stockpile of U.S. used nuclear fuel. Such an entity should possess the following characteristics:

- access to nuclear waste fees, not subject to annual congressional appropriations;
- governance that promotes long-range planning and continuity of leadership;
- authority to provide consolidated interim storage, nuclear fuel recycling, and geologic disposal consistent with laws, policies, and regulations;
- authority to support U.S. national security and nonproliferation objectives on a full-cost reimbursement basis;
- fully subject to U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regulations.



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