COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT/RAILROADS JOINT HEARING ON TRANSPORTATION OF SPENT RODS TO THE PROPOSED YUCCA MOUNTAIN STORAGE FACILITY

STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN DENNIS J. KUCINICH

April 25, 2002

Mr. Chairman, I am deeply concerned about massive campaign to move highly radioactive waste across the U.S. to Yucca Mountain, Nevada. My constituents in Cleveland, Ohio will be subjected to repeated shipments with minimal safeguards.

The transportation of high-level radioactive waste to a Yucca Mountain repository would require a massive transportation undertaking. More highly radioactive waste would be shipped in the first full year of repository operations than has been transported in the entire five-decade history of spent fuel shipments in the United States.

The transportation of this waste would require over 96,000 truck shipments over four decades. Almost every major east-west interstate highway and mainline railroad in the country would experience high-level waste shipments as waste is moved from reactors and other sites in 39 states.

The Department of Energy proposes to directly impact 44 states and many of the major metropolitan areas in the nation, at least 109 cities with populations exceeding 100,000. Highway shipments alone will impact at least 703 counties with a combined population of 123 million people. Nationally, 11 million people reside within one- half mile of a truck or rail route.

This never-before-attempted radioactive materials transportation effort would bring with it a constellation of hazards and risks, including potentially serious economic damage and property value losses in cities and communities along shipping routes. Also of concern are the increased security risks from shipments that represent numerous mobile targets within some of the country's most populous and vulnerable metropolitan areas. This committee must understand that high-level nuclear waste will remain deadly for a million years

If sending nuclear waste down our roads and rails with limited safeguards doesn't bother you, then maybe placing this deadly waste on barges in our rivers, lakes, and oceans will. Because of a lack of rail facilities to several reactors, The Department of Energy will use barge shipments to move this waste to a port cable of transferring the 120 ton cask to a train.

Some of these shipments will occur on the Great Lakes. The Great Lakes is the world's largest source of fresh water. Over 35 million people living in the Great Lakes basin use it for drinking water, and I will venture to guess they will not be appreciative of nuclear waste shipments across their drinking water. I cannot support any plan that even contemplates shipping highly radioactive waste in the Great Lakes.

Before any nuclear waste shipments occur, the federal government must ensure the safety and security of these shipments. Therefore, today, I am introducing the Nuclear Waste Transportation Protection Amendments Act of 2002. This legislation would establish a comprehensive nuclear waste transportation safety program that establishes greater safety and security enhancements.

Specifically, the legislation would establish:

1. **Comprehensive Nuclear Waste Transportation Safety Program** - Requires the Secretary of Energy to develop a comprehensive safety program that includes driver selection, independent inspections, bad weather protocols, road condition reporting, safe parking areas, advance notice, real time tracking and monitoring, emergency response, medical preparedness, equipment standards, training and exercises, mutual aid agreements, emergency alternative routing, program evaluation, and public information.

2. **Protecting Populated Communities** - Prohibits the shipment of waste through areas with a population greater than 50,000 unless the waste originates in that community.

3. **Oldest Fuel First** - All shipments must begin with the oldest spent nuclear fuel first which will lessen the radiation exposure because older fuel is less radioactive.

4. **Full-scale Cask Testing** - Requires that transportation casks are tested at full-scale to demonstrate compliance with NRC performance standards. It also ensures a stakeholder role in development of cask testing program, including selection of test facilities, personnel, and peer review.

5. **State and Local Route Consultation** - Routes must be selected with maximum consultation with affected state, local and tribal governments.

6. **Private Carrier Prohibition** - Prohibits private carriers from transporting high level nuclear waste. The environmental and security risks are too large to be left to the private sector.

7. **Advanced Notification** - A minimum of 14 days is required for advanced notification including the advanced notice for local communities, not just states.

8. **Security Precautions** - Mandate all rail shipments be made in dedicated trains. Mandate three armed escorts per nuclear waste convoy, a trailer vehicle and lead vehicle. Shipments shall be scheduled to avoid regular patterns. Such shipments shall be planned in order to minimize storage times and to assure that deliveries occur at a time when the receiver at the final delivery point is present to accept the shipment.

This legislation offers significant, but reasonable protections, for my district and approximately 320 other districts in this nation who will see high-level nuclear waste transported through their district.