Written by Gallupsun Staff
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Editor,

At a scoping meeting on May 21, 2018 in Gallup (NM) hosted by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) on behalf of Holtec International and its proposal to bring all of the existing commercial high-level radioactive spent fuel from nuclear reactors from the East Coast to New Mexico, over 100 individuals attended.

There were 37 speakers; 36 were opposed to the transport of high-level nuclear waste through our region by Holtec, International. When an Holtec Int'l. employee tried to speak during the Public Comment session, Attendee Susan Schuurman stood up and objected to this unacceptable breach; I stood up as well in solidarity with her.

No one representing the Navajo Nation government were in attendance. Navajo Nation Council delegate Jonathan Perry (Becenti, Lake Valley, Nahodishgish, Standing Rock, Whiterock, Huerfano, Nageezi, Crownpoint) represented his constituents. There are over 14 Navajo communities along the proposed transport route and no NRC public meetings scheduled for them. Additional meetings are urgently needed for the neglected Navajo Communities along the transportation route and translators/interpreters should be provided by the NRC and Holtec, Int'l at their expense.

No one from the City of Gallup, McKinley County or the State of New Mexico representing Districts 5 or District 9 (McKinley and San Juan Counties) attended either. Representative Stephanie Garcia Richard, (D) -- (Los Alamos, Rio Arriba, Sandoval and Santa Fe) was the only State Representative in attendance who spoke on behalf of the people of New Mexico and opposed Holtec, Int'l.

With approximately 99 nuclear reactors on the East coast, there are 20 planned phases of the transportation of 500 canisters of spent radioactive nuclear fuel; this adds to up to 10,000 canisters during that period on Interstate I-40 and the BNSF railroad, both of which run through the heart of Gallup.

The presentation by Holtec, Int'l. did not elaborate on the potential for an accident along the

route and the question of whether Gallup has a contingency plan to arrange for the containment of a spill or mishap near or in the city. The liability issues are not addressed and there is no HAZMAT emergency response team that is equipped to handle a catastrophic radioactive event in the city, county or Navajo Nation.

The issue of the United States government's "Trust Responsibility" to all indigenous tribes in America has been all but abandoned by the Donald Trump White House administration so our right to the protection of our lives, land and resources are basically non-existent at this crucial juncture.

From the extraction of uranium to the Final Solution of storage, it must be noted that the half-life of Uranium-238, the most prevalent isotope in uranium ore, has a half-life of about 4.5 billion years. In human terms, this is forever. Therefore, along with others, I remain strongly opposed to making New Mexico and Tribal Lands, a radioactive waste land.

With the proposed reactivation of the Church Rock and Crownpoint (NM) former uranium mines, the solution is very simple: Keep uranium in the ground. NO mining, NO waste.

Mervyn Tilden

Church Rock, N.M.