

Trump budget contains \$120M to restart licensing of Yucca Mountain

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Members of a congressional tour of the Yucca Mountain exploratory tunnel enter the south portal, April 9, 2015. (Sam Morris/Las Vegas Review-Journal)

**By Gary Martin Review-Journal Washington Bureau
February 12, 2018**

Mr. Martin, I seldom have the time, but, because you returned a memo, I will explain, some of a balanced position. (My comments in blue). G Duarte, Director, US Nuclear Energy Foundation

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WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump renewed his commitment to restart licensing on the controversial Yucca Mountain nuclear repository in Nevada on Monday with a funding request tucked into a \$4.4 trillion budget blueprint.

Trump included \$120 million to restart licensing on the geologic site north of Las Vegas, as well as to establish an interim storage program to address the growing stockpile of nuclear waste produced by power plants in states across the nation. **Completion of the application process is Congressional law. The public has a right to know that the stoppage of the application was caused by political obstruction (defunding its completion) rather than going back to Congress and reversing the law.**

The funds are just part of the \$30.6 billion budget request for the Department of Energy for fiscal year 2019, which begins Oct. 1.

Energy Secretary Rick Perry said the \$120 million would be used for the licensing application process. Application hearings must be held to hear challenges by Nevada and other stakeholders. **The people have a right to know that every Executive Summary at the beginning of the Yucca Application Review Process proved the science and engineering safety.**

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission must determine whether Yucca Mountain is safe for long-term storage, and issue a license for Energy to build the repository.

“We have a legal responsibility. We have this waste out there. We need to have this licensing issue addressed,” Perry said Monday.

The NRC also is seeking more than \$47.7 million for the licensing process at Yucca Mountain, which was designated by Congress in 1987 as the sole site to permanently store nuclear waste. The licensing process was halted during the Obama administration.

Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval, the state’s two senators, Republican Dean Heller and Democrat Catherine Cortez Masto, and Democratic Reps Dina Titus, Jacky Rosen and Ruben Kihuen oppose the Yucca Mountain project. [Although this statement is collectively emotional it is based on “opinion” NOT scientific proof. The “people” have a right to know that the State of Nevada has not been able to provide substantiated proof that Yucca is not safe. These elected officials claim to represent the people of Nevada, but, statements like this have no merit, so, the people are misled. Making a statement such as this is collective deception.](#)

Rep. Mark Amodei, R-Nev., and Nye County, where Yucca Mountain is located, and other rural Nevada counties, support continuing the licensing process.

Delegation reacts

Although the House has backed efforts to restart licensing on Yucca Mountain, the Senate did not approve funding last year.

“Despite Congress’ refusal to fund the Yucca Mountain project, the administration is once again prioritizing it,” Heller said. He claims the project poses a threat to the people of southern Nevada and could have a catastrophic impact on the tourism economy.

“I’ve made it clear why Nevada does not want to turn into the nation’s nuclear waste dump,” Heller said. [This statement is unsubstantiated emotional conjecture . . . a catastrophic impact on the tourism economy? The 4 largest Las Vegas casinos were a 5.6 billion-dollar build. The Tesla giga-factory, Sparks, NV is a 6-billion-dollar build. Yucca Mountain is projected at being a \\$97 billion-dollar build. One would have to be completely void of common sense to think that such a build would devastate Nevada tourism, it would more than likely double the Las Vegas economy. The French company AREVA get 250 inquiries annually for visitors to their nuclear waste storage facility in La Hague, France.](#)

Cortez Masto said it is a disgrace that the president and some members of Congress continue to seek taxpayer money for the project.

“Proponents of Yucca Mountain have already wasted more than \$15 billion on a hole in the ground and have nothing to show for it,” Cortez Masto said. [This is rather astounding that a grown person would make such an outrageous statement. “Proponents of Yucca Mountain is, “Congressional Law” taxpayers have invested \\$15 billion . . . again missing the point, the show IS the Application Process Study, proving the long term safety of the facility. These are the facts that the people have a right to know. Ms. Masto failed to mention that the “political obstruction” of Yucca Mountain is NOW costing taxpayers \\$10-billion annually in legal suits WON by the nuclear industry caused by the Yucca default!](#)

Members of Nevada’s congressional delegation also oppose another Trump administration public land program proposal.

The \$11.7 billion budget for the Department of Interior includes a proposal to take \$230 million in unobligated balances from the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act program. The money is generated from the sale of public land.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke told reporters the budget has a strong focus on rebuilding national parks and addressing a backlog of repairs to roads and visitor facilities.

There is a \$11.6 million maintenance backlog within the National Park Service alone, he said.

Zinke said there is \$600 million in the Southern Nevada land program. The \$230 million reduction would take place over a three-year period and would not end the program, he said.

The Southern Nevada land management program allows the Bureau of Land Management to sell land near Las Vegas and use those proceeds on conservation and restoration projects under a federal-state-local partnership.

More than \$3.4 billion has been spent on 1,200 projects throughout Nevada since 1998.

Rosen said the budget proposal from Interior would “rob” Southern Nevada of a revenue source for “our state’s education system, water authority and projects that protect and maintain our public lands.”

“The Trump budget also attacks the heart of our community,” added Titus. “The successful Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act, which has paid for the restoration of Red Rock Canyon, bike trails, and other parks, would be defunded in order to pay for the president’s misplaced priorities, including his great wall along our southern border.”

Budget blueprint

But the Trump administration’s priority to restart the licensing process at Yucca Mountain prompted the most reaction from Nevada lawmakers Monday.

Presidential budget blueprints have traditionally been a wish-list of projects and spending that Congress alters during the authorization and appropriations process.

The Trump administration sought \$120 million for DOE to jumpstart the licensing process last year. The House upped the figure to \$150 million, to include an interim storage process, but Senate budget writers zeroed out the request in its spending bill.

Nye County Commissioner Dan Schinhofen applauded the Trump administration’s effort to continue the licensing process on the Yucca Mountain repository, which is not completed, to determine if the site “is even safe for its construction.” [This is another misleading “portion” of the story, Mr. Schinhofen is correct, the primary point being, “completion of the Application Process”. And, there is no mention of 8 other Nevada counties who SUPPORT completion of the Application Process? As a responsibility the public, if you analyzed “Nevada” you would find that the “majority” of the state supports the Yucca Application. The opposition is primarily Clark County, and the casino influence on Nevada politicians. Another example of Nevada North and South battling, but, on Yucca it’s Clark County and all of rural Nevada.](#)

“All the president’s budget does is allow for the science to be heard on the safety of Yucca Mountain,” Schinhofen said.

Senate GOP candidate Danny Tarkanian, a Las Vegas lawyer, also said he supports the administration priority to license Yucca Mountain as a permanent repository.

Tarkanian said building the facility would prompt a boost in federal spending and job creation in the state, and position Nevada for nuclear waste reprocessing. [Absolutely correct. Mr. Tarkanian realizes that reprocessing, coming of age a few years down the road knows that our current Yucca inventory is, by, a \(Kenneth Kok, PE documented study\) valued at \\$14 trillion dollars.](#)

But congressional lawmakers from Southern Nevada said opposition to the project would continue. [This is a somewhat accurate statement, important to note, “lawmakers from Southern Nevada”. The reference to stakeholders in this context is the casino industry who oppose Yucca, because it is so massive, may well generate a paradigm shift in the business and political control of Nevada.](#)

Rep. Ruben Kihuen, D-Nev., said the money would be better used on research and development on renewable energy technology. [This is another example of ill-informed politicians about nuclear technology. Politics and media have spent](#)

50 years demonizing nuclear while it for 50 years has always provided the largest amount of carbon free energy. The renewable industry has been challenged to classify nuclear as a renewable source, as it IS!

Titus said the \$120 million would be “a tiny down payment on a project that will cost \$100 billion and ship nuclear waste through hundreds of congressional districts across the country.”

Las Vegas Mayor Carolyn Goodman, at the White House for an announcement on the president’s infrastructure plan, told the Review-Journal that while she did not talk to Trump about Yucca Mountain, she said nuclear waste could not be shipped there until improvements are made.

“You dare not send it to Yucca until the infrastructure’s fixed,” Goodman said. Again, an “opinion” comment not based on research. All of the transportation issues and questions are answered in the Application Review Process. Again, this does not present an accurate “story” on the Yucca Mountain charade, the people have been given a non-factual inference that the transportation is not addressed, but, it is.

If freedom of speech is throttled by politically correct opinion, the truth of facts will never reach public policy. The public, and in reference to many government programs, must be educated so that their opinion can be engaged compared to the political rendering of issues through its “opinion”. Government agencies and the industry need to focus on renewing nuclear technology around the education of public policy from the grassroots instead of from the politics. This directly relates to the 30-year political derailment of the Yucca Mountain Project.

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