

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 20, 2020

The Honorable Kristine L. Svinicki
Chairman
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Mail Stop O-16 B33
Washington, DC 20555-0001

Dear Chairman Svinicki:

In response to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, we urge the Commission to delay any public meetings and to extend the 60-day public comment period regarding the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Holtec's proposed spent nuclear fuel storage facility in Southeast New Mexico (NRC-2018-0052). The recent guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control is that public gatherings should not be held at this time.

We believe it is essential the NRC provide an open and transparent review process with ample opportunity for public input on Holtec's proposal. Allowing for full public participation, as NEPA requires, is particularly important for projects involving nuclear waste. Any proposal to store commercial spent nuclear fuel raises a number of health, safety and environmental issues, including potential impacts on local agriculture and industry, issues related to the transportation of nuclear waste, and disproportionate impacts on Native American communities.

As previously demonstrated at the five public meetings NRC held on the project in 2018, the proposal to store high-level nuclear waste has prompted a great deal of public interest across New Mexico. The concerns are in part driven by the prospect that any temporary storage facility will remain in the state indefinitely while a pathway for permanent disposal for high-level radioactive waste is identified.

We respectfully urge you to extend the public comment period until the threat of covid-19 has passed and it is again safe to attend public meetings. In addition, NRC should schedule public meetings at locations across New Mexico to allow ample opportunity for full participation.

Sincerely,

s/ Tom Udall
Tom Udall
United States Senator

s/ Martin Heinrich
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

s/ Ben Ray Luján
Ben Ray Luján
United States Representative

s/ Deb Haaland
Deb Haaland
United States Representative

s/ Xochitl Torres Small
Xochitl Torres Small
United States Representative