Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 5, 2009

The Honorable Steven Chu
Secretary of Energy
Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington D.C. 20585

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are writing to you today to express our concern over the Administration's position regarding the Yucca Mountain high-level waste and spent nuclear fuel deep geologic disposal repository. Our home state of Idaho is relying on the continued development of the Yucca Mountain repository for the final disposal of high level waste and spent nuclear fuel that is currently stored in our state on an interim basis. However, the Administration's FY 2010 budget request makes it clear that the Department of Energy (DOE) will be directed to significantly scale back its activities on the Yucca Mountain repository, leaving Idaho and others without a final disposal option.

Today, Idaho is home to over 300 metric tons of defense spent nuclear fuel and 4,400 cubic meters of high level waste. This waste has been stored at the Idaho National Laboratory since the 1950's, as Idaho played its part in supporting the Nation's Cold War national security mission, through programs like the Navy Nuclear program. Idaho's continued cooperation in support of these missions is in large part based on the 1995 Settlement Agreement between the State and the Federal Government ensuring the eventual removal of this high-level waste.

The Settlement Agreement clearly outlines the Federal Government's responsibility and a schedule for the clean up and removal of the high level waste and spent nuclear fuel out of the State by 2035. The language included in the FY 2010 budget request puts this milestone at risk and ensures that Idaho retains the Federal Government's liabilities for the continued storage of this waste, which is unacceptable.

Deep geologic disposal is the only disposal option for this type of defense waste. If DOE is not going to continue development of the Yucca Mountain repository then we would like you to explain to us how the Federal Government will maintain its commitment to the State and remove this waste out of Idaho by 2035.

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We look forward to a response and we would to like to schedule a meeting at your earliest convenience to discuss this issue in greater detail.

Sincerely,

Senator Mike Crapo

Senator Jim Risch

Representative Simpson

Representative Minnick