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HOUSE MEMORIAL 21

**54TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2020**

INTRODUCED BY

Matthew McQueen

A MEMORIAL

IN OPPOSITION TO THE TRANSPORTATION OF HIGH-LEVEL RADIOACTIVE  
WASTE TO, AND STORAGE IN, NEW MEXICO.

WHEREAS, the problem of what to do with nuclear waste is  
ongoing and largely unanswered; and

WHEREAS, finding repositories for spent nuclear fuel is a  
concern, as many types of radioactive waste remain dangerously  
radioactive for thousands of years after they are no longer  
useful in a commercial reactor; and

WHEREAS, the Eddy-Lea energy alliance, an alliance of the  
cities of Carlsbad and Hobbs and Eddy and Lea counties, was  
formed to focus on the creation of an "interim" storage  
facility for spent nuclear fuel; and

WHEREAS, Holtec international has applied to the United  
States nuclear regulatory commission for a license to construct

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1 and operate a consolidated interim storage facility on land  
2 located between Hobbs and Carlsbad, along United States highway  
3 62/180, and to transport up to one hundred thousand metric tons  
4 of high-level radioactive waste, or spent fuel, from ninety-six  
5 commercial nuclear reactors in the United States; and

6 WHEREAS, despite the fact that New Mexico has never had an  
7 operational commercial nuclear reactor, the state nevertheless  
8 has hundreds of abandoned and unreclaimed uranium mining sites  
9 that have compromised the health of multiple generations of  
10 people, including the Native American population, and that have  
11 contaminated soil and water; and

12 WHEREAS, New Mexico is already the storage site of the  
13 nation's nuclear-weapons-defense-related transuranic waste at  
14 the waste isolation pilot plant near Carlsbad; and

15 WHEREAS, the transport to New Mexico of high-level  
16 radioactive waste by rail from the eastern United States, where  
17 ninety percent of the nuclear reactors are located, creates an  
18 unacceptable risk for New Mexicans and residents in more than  
19 forty other states; and

20 WHEREAS, the proposed "interim" storage facility  
21 anticipates a "temporary" storage period of fifty years, but  
22 since no permanent repository exists, such "interim" storage  
23 could become permanent; and

24 WHEREAS, Holtec international's plan to build proposed  
25 interim storage of high-level radioactive waste in New Mexico

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1 has been met with stringent opposition from many sectors; and

2 WHEREAS, in a June 7, 2019 letter to the United States  
3 secretary of energy and the chair of the United States nuclear  
4 regulatory commission, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham stated  
5 that the interim storage facility poses significant and  
6 unacceptable risks to New Mexicans, the environment and the  
7 state's economy; and

8 WHEREAS, the governor also noted that the facility poses  
9 unacceptable risk to New Mexicans, who look to southeastern New  
10 Mexico as a driver of economic growth in the state, with  
11 agricultural industry contributions of approximately three  
12 billion dollars (\$3,000,000,000) per year to the state's  
13 economy, of which three hundred million dollars (\$300,000,000)  
14 is generated in Eddy and Lea counties, where the proposed  
15 facility would be located; and

16 WHEREAS, Commissioner of Public Lands Stephanie Garcia  
17 Richard also raised concerns with the proposal, stating that  
18 New Mexico is not the right location for high-level nuclear  
19 storage and that there is no guarantee that high-level nuclear  
20 waste can be safely transported to and through New Mexico or  
21 that the site would truly be "interim"; and

22 WHEREAS, existing industrial, agricultural and ranching  
23 businesses that generate more than thirty-eight thousand jobs  
24 and more than three billion dollars (\$3,000,000,000) in annual  
25 revenues to the state and oil and gas production that generates

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1 more than two billion dollars (\$2,000,000,000) in annual tax  
2 revenue to the state could be negatively affected by the  
3 proposed facility, including that high-level radioactive waste  
4 could threaten the land values and marketability of those  
5 products; and

6 WHEREAS, tourism is a major contributor to New Mexico's  
7 economy, with visitor spending generating income, jobs and tax  
8 revenue, and in 2018 just over thirty-seven million five  
9 hundred thousand visitors spent seven billion one hundred  
10 million dollars (\$7,100,000,000) in New Mexico, according to  
11 the "Economic Impact of Tourism in New Mexico 2018" report; and

12 WHEREAS, record numbers of visits to state parks,  
13 historical sites and museums increased for the seventh  
14 consecutive year, with thirty-seven million five hundred  
15 thousand trips taken to and around the state in 2018, visitor  
16 spending having increased seven percent in 2018 and visitor  
17 spending sustaining eight and five-tenths percent of all jobs  
18 in New Mexico; and

19 WHEREAS, the creation of a high-level radioactive waste  
20 storage facility in New Mexico jeopardizes the state's existing  
21 industrial, agricultural and ranching businesses, runs counter  
22 to the promotion of tourism and the diversification of New  
23 Mexico's economy and threatens the health and safety of New  
24 Mexico residents;

25 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF

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1 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the house of  
2 representatives oppose the transportation of high-level  
3 radioactive waste to, and storage in, New Mexico; and

4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be  
5 transmitted to the governor, the New Mexico congressional  
6 delegation, the United States secretary of energy and the  
7 United States assistant secretary for office of nuclear energy.