

I have been a longtime supporter of nuclear power as a safe, cost-effective, and emissions-free source of electricity for our nation. Therefore, I was extremely pleased during this year's State of the Union Address to hear President Obama say that we need to be building a "new generation of safe, clean nuclear power plants in this country." What I find very troubling, however, is that the President's actions on this issue run contrary to his stated goal. Most important, the President's proposed budget provides no funding for construction of the essential Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Repository Project, and he also intends to withdraw the Department of Energy's application to license the project. These two actions will effectively stop this desperately needed project.

Nearly 30 years ago, passage of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act called for the federal government to begin collecting nuclear waste in 1998, at a facility financed by waste disposal fees from electric ratepayers. Yet in 2010, the federal government is still failing to fulfill this promise despite having collected over \$30 billion from electric ratepayers. While current nuclear facilities have the capacity to store waste on-site for several years to come, the lack of a permanent repository presents a significant barrier to building new nuclear power plants.

In order to license a new facility or even relicense an existing one, the federal government must demonstrate that it can safely dispose of the waste. As such, the President's move to halt Yucca Mountain obviously holds great implications for the licensing of new and existing capacity. Furthermore, the State of California, which is struggling to meet greenhouse gas reduction goals required by state law, is prohibited under state law from allowing any new nuclear plants until the means for permanent disposal of nuclear waste has been demonstrated and approved by the federal government.

So, despite the President's positive rhetoric on nuclear energy development, his actions thus far are disappointing and insufficient. It is crucial that the President match his ideas with a commitment to improving our domestic energy production. I continue to strongly support the development of a permanent nuclear waste repository in order to actually achieve President Obama's goal and will be doing all I can to continue to encourage the responsible expansion of nuclear energy.