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Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

September 10, 2001

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The Honorable Spencer Abraham  
Secretary of Energy  
1000 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Mr. Secretary:

As you may know, the Inyo County Board of Supervisors in California was notified on August 21, 2001 of the DOE's decision to limit public hearings on the Preliminary Site Suitability Evaluation (PSSE) to three locations in Nevada and to establish a September 20, 2001 deadline for public comment on the PSSE. Such short notice, as well as the decision to limit hearings to Nevada is, in our view, unacceptable. We are writing to request a 60-day extension of the comment period for the recently released "Yucca Mountain Preliminary Site Suitability Evaluation." Further, we are asking that the Department of Energy specifically conduct a PSSE hearing in California.

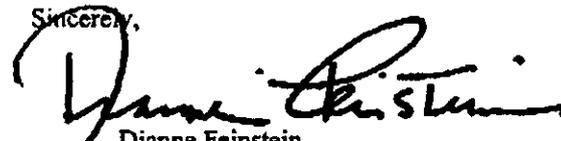
Inyo County is recognized by the federal government as an affected unit of local government and receives funds to conduct external oversight responsibilities relating to the Yucca Mountain site. Few locations will more be more directly impacted by the site than Inyo County and Death Valley National Park. As a result, we believe it is essential that the Department schedule a public Site Recommendation Consideration hearing in California in the proximity of Inyo County. Furnace Creek in Death Valley National Park presents a viable location for such a hearing.

Inyo county is presently in the process of reviewing significant amounts of material relating to the Science and Engineering Report, extensive supplementary analyses, and the PSSE. The September 20, 2001 deadline for public comment, and limited financial resources, restrict the County from reviewing relevant materials and its ability to publicly discuss and adopt a response to the PSSE recommendation evaluation. Such a deadline would limit the Board to making a final decision on September 18. The Inyo County Board, and this process, would be far better served by a hearing after September 18 so that Inyo County Board can make its conclusions in the context of a public hearing. A 60-day extension of the comment period would achieve this goal.

Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for your timely consideration. Should you have any additional questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to have your staff contact Dave LesStrang (Lewis) at 202-225-5861 or Warren Weinstein (Feinstein) at 202-224-3841.

Sincerely,

  
Jerry Lewis  
Member of Congress

  
Dianne Feinstein  
U.S. Senator