

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 6, 2018

The Honorable Rick Perry
Secretary
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Secretary Perry:

I write today to express my strong opposition to the Department of Energy (DOE) proposal to store up to one metric ton of weapons-grade plutonium at the Nevada National Security Site (NNSS). Before any further action is taken, at minimum, I respectfully request that a full National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis be undertaken so that all affected parties, including the State of Nevada, can understand the true scope of the health and environmental impacts likely to result from this proposed action. DOE's desire to expeditiously pursue this proposal does not outweigh the rights of Nevadans to be safe in their own backyard. I strongly believe that it is completely inappropriate to consider the proposal before Nevadans have the opportunity to fully understand the potential health, safety, and economic risks it presents should DOE move forward with storing this material at NNSS.

As you know, this proposed action comes as a direct result of a district court order mandating the removal of one ton of plutonium from DOE's Savannah River Site, located in South Carolina. Because DOE and the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) failed to take necessary action and complete the Mixed Oxide (MOX) Fuel Fabrication Facility in a timely manner, they now seek to fix their first wrong by committing a second one, proposing to ship large amounts of highly enriched defense-grade plutonium from the Savannah River Site across the entire country to the Device Assembly Facility at NNSS, near Las Vegas. Rather than provide any economic benefit to the State of Nevada, DOE and NNSA merely plan to move these dangerous defense materials in and out of the State and force Nevadans to bear the health and safety risks of this unreasonable and unnecessary transportation and storage. In addition, to add insult to injury, it appears likely that should DOE move forward with this proposal, NNSS will also receive low-grade nuclear waste resulting from the production of new nuclear pits to expand the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile.

Given the unresolved health and safety concerns and DOE's failure to conduct a necessary and proper environmental review, I am strongly opposed to this proposal. I once again respectfully urge you to conduct a full NEPA analysis prior to any further action being taken. DOE's desire to move forward rapidly, something it did not do with respect to the South

Carolina MOX facility, does not eliminate the need to follow established safety protocols to examine the health and safety risks of this project. Thank you for your timely attention to this request, and I look forward to receiving a reply to my letter no later than September 20, 2018.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dean Heller". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dean" and the last name "Heller" clearly distinguishable.

DEAN HELLER
U.S. Senator