

Utah: the dumping ground for the world's nuclear waste?

EnergySolutions, the nation's largest commercial low-level nuclear waste dump has asked the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) for permission to import 20,000 tons of radioactive waste from dismantled nuclear reactors in Italy. The waste would be melted down and incinerated at an EnergySolutions' facility in Tennessee and then the radioactive leftovers would be disposed at the company's dumpsite in Utah.

Governor Jon Huntsman, the Utah Radiation Control Board, and thousands of Utahns are opposed to EnergySolutions' plan, yet the company is suing to get its way.



Representative Jim Matheson (D-UT), along with congressmen from Tennessee and Kentucky, is co-sponsoring bipartisan legislation to ban the importation of low-level radioactive waste into the United States. Senators from Maryland and Tennessee are sponsoring a Senate version of the bill.

The foreign waste ban bills, H.R. 5632 and S. 3225, are critical to keeping foreign nuclear waste out of Utah.

EnergySolutions' import request:

- **A dangerous precedent.** EnergySolutions claims that its request to dump Italian nuclear waste in the U.S. is "business as usual." Yet, this single import request is almost 10 times greater than all previous foreign nuclear waste imports for disposal granted by the NRC *combined* (see Figure 1).ⁱ
- **The tip of the iceberg.** EnergySolutions has made clear it plans to aggressively pursue foreign nuclear waste contracts as an important revenue stream for its shareholders.ⁱⁱ Granting approval to this proposal would open the door to the U.S. becoming the world's nuclear waste dump and create a disincentive for foreign nations to dispose of their own radioactive waste. EnergySolutions is already soliciting contracts to dispose nuclear waste from the United Kingdom in Utah.ⁱⁱⁱ
- **A danger to public health and safety.** EnergySolutions' import application states that "the generators of this material are not fully known," meaning that it plans to ship unknown types of nuclear material over oceans, into ports, and through U.S. cities and towns.
- **Bad for domestic nuclear waste disposal.** Dumping large quantities of foreign nuclear waste in the U.S. will only constrain further our domestic disposal capacity^{iv} and result in the need for expanded or new nuclear waste dumpsites. This presents a clear danger to public health and the environment, and to taxpayers who could be held liable for cleaning up radioactive waste sites once they are closed.
- **An unwanted change in national policy.** Neither the Congress nor the NRC ever intended that domestic nuclear waste sites be used for the commercial importation of foreign nuclear waste.^v Importations were only to be granted if they served an "important policy goal." EnergySolutions' import serves only its shareholders.

ⁱ There have been a total of 24 applications to import low-level radioactive waste filed with the NRC, of which 13 have been granted. Some are for amounts as small as a cubic meter or a few dozen kilograms.

ⁱⁱ Prospectus of EnergySolutions, SEC Registration No. 333-141645, Nov. 17, 2007, pp. 4-5.

ⁱⁱⁱ "U.K. waste next in line for Utah?" *Salt Lake Tribune*, May 28, 2008.

^{iv} Disposal space for U.S. low-level waste is limited. EnergySolutions is the only disposal option for 36 states, with 96% of commercial low-level nuclear waste being dumped in Utah. Importing foreign nuclear waste will only compound this problem.

^v Letter from the Honorable Bart Gordon, U.S. House of Representatives, to the Honorable Dale Klein, Chairman, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Feb. 12, 2008.

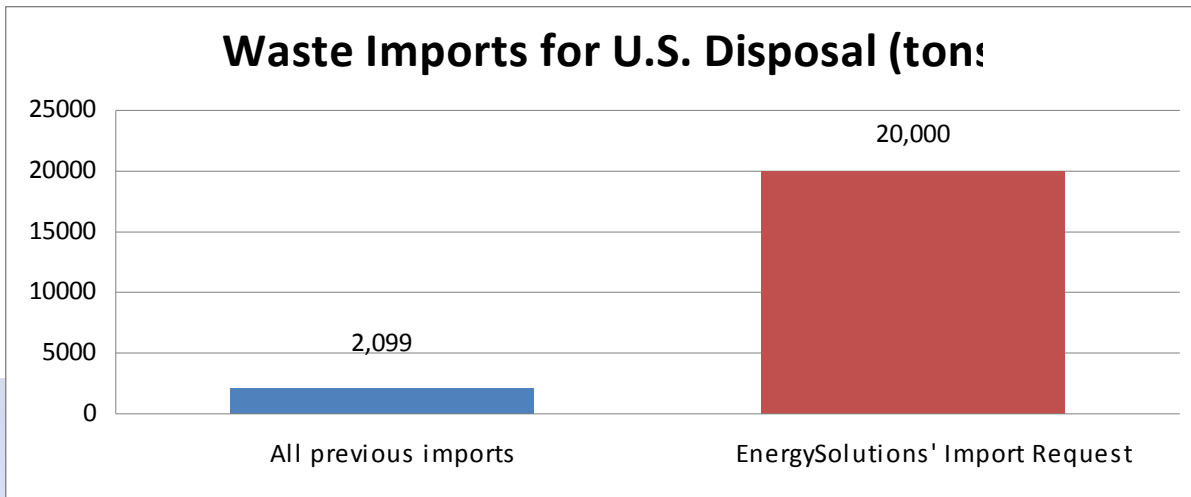


Figure 1. EnergySolutions' import request to the NRC for 20,000 tons of low-level nuclear waste from Italy is almost ten times greater than all previously approved import requests for domestic disposal combined.

