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Beyond Nuclear urges U.S. Senate reject confirmation for former Texas governor Rick Perry as Energy Secretary

Watchdog group cites blatant conflict of interest with Waste Control Specialists radioactive waste dump in West Texas

Capitol Hill, Washington, D.C.--Former Texas governor Rick Perry's nomination hearing for Energy Secretary before the U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources (ENR) Committee begins at 10am Eastern this morning.

Beyond Nuclear, a national watchdog organization on the nuclear power industry, has published [a backgrounder at Counterpunch](http://www.counterpunch.org/2017/01/09/radioactive-waste-is-good-for-you-or-how-i-learned-to-stop-worrying-and-love-rick-perry-as-energy-secretary/) entitled "[Radioactive Waste is Good for You, or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Rick Perry as Energy Secretary.](http://www.counterpunch.org/2017/01/09/radioactive-waste-is-good-for-you-or-how-i-learned-to-stop-worrying-and-love-rick-perry-as-energy-secretary/)" [posted online at: <http://www.counterpunch.org/2017/01/09/radioactive-waste-is-good-for-you-or-how-i-learned-to-stop-worrying-and-love-rick-perry-as-energy-secretary/>]

Kevin Kamps, Beyond Nuclear's radioactive waste specialist and author of the article, states:

"Gov. Perry should be disqualified to serve as Energy Secretary, due to his blatant conflict of interest with the Waste Control Specialists, LLC radioactive waste dump in West Texas."

As documented in the article, Waste Control Specialists' (WCS) owner, Harold Simmons, a Dallas billionaire nicknamed the "King of Superfund Sites," was a top Perry campaign contributor. (Simmons died in 2013, but his family still owns WCS). Thanks to numerous state regulatory approvals during his governorship, and additional direct advocacy by Perry himself, the very controversial WCS grew to become a national "low-level" radioactive waste dump for the Department of Energy (DOE) and 36 states.

WCS has now applied to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to become a centralized interim storage site for more than half the commercial high-level radioactive waste in the U.S. NRC continues to review the application, even though a coalition of environmental groups has objected that the proposal is illegal (see the coalition [letter](#) and [press release](#), posted online at: <http://www.beyondnuclear.org/waste-transportation/2016/10/26/despise-setbacks-beyond-nuclear-and-allies-continue-to-chall.html>).

If opened, and a contract signed with DOE, the cost of construction and operations at the WCS *de facto* permanent parking lot dump would be paid entirely by U.S. taxpayers; they would also bear full liability for any hazardous radioactivity releases into the Ogallala Aquifer below, source of vital drinking and irrigation water for millions on the Great Plains from Texas to South Dakota.

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WCS also raises serious environmental justice issues, as its host county, Andrews, and immediately adjacent (and potentially downstream and downwind) areas of New Mexico, have a large percentage of Latin American residents, and also low-income residents. These low-income, people of color communities are already burdened by disproportionate dirty and dangerous energy industry impacts.

As such risk-taking flies in the face of the water protectors' wisdom at the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Reservation in North Dakota on the Missouri River -- that "Mni Wiconi," "Water Is Life" - - Beyond Nuclear has alerted its members and supporters across the U.S. to contact their U.S. Senators, to urge them to help lead efforts to block Perry's confirmation, due to his blatant conflict of interest regarding WCS. (Gov. Perry served on multiple corporate boards of companies directly involved in the highly controversial Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL); he only resigned his positions very recently. The owner of Energy Transfer Partners, behind DAPL, Kelcy Warren, another Dallas billionaire, is another top Perry campaign contributor.)

A *de facto* permanent parking lot dump for commercial irradiated nuclear fuel from atomic reactors across the U.S. would also launch unprecedented numbers of shipments of high-level radioactive waste onto the rails of many states (see likely route maps, at the previous link given above). As some two-dozen reactors lack direct rail access, barges could also be used, to transfer the 100-ton or heavier rail shipping casks to the nearest railhead. Waterways that could be used include rivers, seacoasts, and the Great Lakes.

Watchdogs have dubbed such shipments "Mobile Chernobyls," "Dirty Bombs on Wheels," and "Floating Fukushimas."

"When it comes to high-level radioactive waste transportation, we all live in Andrews, Texas," said Kevin Kamps, Beyond Nuclear's radioactive waste specialist. "Such radioactive Russian roulette on the roads, rails, and waterways will create significant safety, security, environmental, and health risks," Kamps added.

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Beyond Nuclear aims to educate and activate the public about the connections between nuclear power and nuclear weapons and the need to abolish both to safeguard our future. Beyond Nuclear advocates for an energy future that is sustainable, benign and democratic.