

Council helps keep state 'enchanted'

Written by Gallupsun Staff
Friday, 28 September 2018 08:57

Editor,

On Sept. 25, the Gallup City Council passed a Resolution No. 2018-27 — “A RESOLUTION OPPOSING TRANSPORTATION OF HIGH-LEVEL RADIOACTIVE WASTE VIA RAILWAY THROUGH THE CITY OF GALLUP FOR THE PURPOSE OF TEMPORARY CONSOLIDATED STORAGE OF RADIOACTIVE WASTE IN NEW MEXICO.”

Five other cities in New Mexico (Albuquerque, Bernalillo, Las Cruces, Jal and Lake Arthur) have passed resolutions in opposition to this transportation on the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway and Interstate 40 which will pass through McKinley County and the City of Gallup.

There are at least 14 Navajo communities along the proposed transport corridor and numerous Navajo homes as well from the Eastern edge of McKinley County to the New Mexico/Arizona State line.

A company, Holtec International, has applied to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for a license to store radioactive waste in a temporary (up to 40 years) underground storage facility in Lea County in Southern New Mexico until a permanent storage location can be identified and built. But I know this is slated to be a permanent site; the same thing happened in Nevada at Yucca Mountain at Skull Valley on the Western Shoshone reservation.

The recent two train derailments in and near Gallup and the accidents on I-40 involving a semi (total loss) and a semi and Greyhound bus that took the lives of eight people speak to the dangers involved.

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission held public scoping meetings across New Mexico including one in Gallup on May 21. The public comment period closed on July 31, 2018. At the meeting there was no official representation from the City of Gallup, the McKinley County Commission, New Mexico State Representatives from Districts 5 or 9 and the Navajo Nation.

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At the NRC hosted meeting there was one hundred percent opposition; not one person spoke in favor of Holtec's proposal. Unfortunately, the concerns of many Navajo residents who reside within the boundaries of McKinley County which includes the Navajo Nation and who are opposed to the reactivation of the Church Rock and Crownpoint uranium mines are left out of the loop when it comes to the United States government "Trust Responsibility."

At prior McKinley County Commission meetings, I have also submitted information regarding the proposed reactivation of said mines and the proposed transportation of high-level radioactive waste by Holtec International through Gallup, McKinley County the State of New Mexico and the Southern border of the Navajo Nation.

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A BIG "Thank you!" to Mayor Jackie McKinney and the Gallup City Council for this Resolution. With the public's safety in mind, I remain hopeful that this "Good Neighbor" action will be followed by the Navajo Nation Council during the Fall Session for the sake of the Navajo people.

The Resolution No. 2018-27 stands with other concerned citizens of New Mexico to keep our State from becoming the Land of Entrapment and remain "The Land of Enchantment."

Mervyn Tilden
Gallup, New Mexico