

Letter to the Editor: Nuke storage, human error and unintended consequences

Written by Gallupsun Staff
Friday, 30 August 2019 01:14

RE: John Heaton, Chairman of the Eddy Lea Energy Alliance, August 09, 2019 comments in *The Gallup Sun* (“The Nuke Storage Debate”) regarding the proposed Holtec’s HI-STORE Consolidated Interim Storage Facility (CISF) and the transportation of high-level radioactive waste across New Mexico.

Heaton writes, “We also do not yet know what the transportation routes the fuel will take to reach the proposed facility will be.” And, he adds that the “project is strongly supported with resolutions from Eddy and Lea County Commissioners, as well as the elected Councilors and Commissioners in Carlsbad and Hobbs.”

That is good news. Since he is relying on resolutions passed by elected “Councilors and Commissioners” from four different counties, Heaton should be well aware that the cities of Albuquerque, Bernalillo, Las Cruces, Jal, Lake Arthur, Belen and Gallup have passed resolutions in opposition to the pipe dream of Holtec International.

On September 25, 2018, the Gallup City Council passed a Resolution No. 2018-27 that opposes the transportation of high-level radioactive waste through the City via I-40 and the BNSF Rail line. McKinley County also has a similar resolution: OCT-18-069, passed on October 02, 2018. The City Council and County Commission are duly elected leaders of our region as well. Perhaps the Eddy-Lea Energy Alliance refuses to read the news items that detail the many “accidents” that have occurred on the proposed New Mexico transportation routes since May 21, 2018; two railway derailments occurred, one just East of Gallup and on the West side within City limits and another within the Belen City limits. At least four “accidents” have occurred within or near the Gallup City limits on I-40, including one involving a Greyhound Bus that took eight (8) lives.

Let’s be clear on this issue: If the transport casks furnished by Holtec Int’l. are capable of performing without failure under a wide range of conditions, Heaton fails to understand the risks also carried by the transportation routes and carriers that travel the Interstate Highways and Railways. Human error must be factored in as well as unintended consequences.

Accordingly, on Saturday, July 13th, the community of Red Water Pond Road hosted the 40th Year Commemoration of the July 16, 1979 North East Church Rock, New Mexico Uranium

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Tailings Spill that released over 1,000 tons of solid radioactive mill waste and more than 90 million gallons of acidic and radioactive liquids into the Rio Puerco. Although clean-up has been promised for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency "Superfund" site that remains on the National Priority List, the corrective actions remain in words only.

The Navajo Nation has the Treaty of 1868 and a Permanent Ban on the transportation of all things nuclear through the reservation, the tribal sovereignty Heaton and his cohorts do not understand or respect. More Public Scoping Meetings are required, not only for the residents of McKinley County but for New Mexico and the Navajo Nation (in New Mexico and Arizona) before the U.S. Government "Trust Responsibility" is once again breached with impunity.

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