to these business conditions. And the mortgaging of our children's future is especially damning when news of the bonuses arrives like it has this week.

When the Troubled Asset Relief Program was first laid out, Members of Congress were assured that this would be a benefit to the public and would make a difference not only in the short term, but especially in the long term.

For many reasons, I did not support the initial bailout, including my belief that there were few taxpayer safeguards within this legislation. Recent actions on the part of AIG only confirmed what I feared. Troubled businesses—and I think this is what is happening here—troubled businesses were not forced to change their failed practices. Instead, they were given a lifeline, and they are beginning to pull us under with them.

Kansans ask only to have an opportunity to earn a paycheck and make a living. Most Americans realize that bonuses are awarded if and when their employer is profitable and successful. AIG is neither. It is not fair, it is not right, and it ought not happen.

I ask my colleagues in the House and the Senate to pursue all methods of recourse against companies that flaunt the will of the American taxpayer. But it is not just AIG we should blame. Congress passed this legislation without timely consideration. We rushed to judgment. In many instance, we violated principles that we know work, principles of an economy. And our actions as a Congress that passed this legislation allowed AIG to pay these bonuses. Shame on AIG and shame on Congress.

By demanding accountability and some commonsense from those businesses that are being assisted, Congress may finally begin to get it right, and the taxpayer may finally be protected.

CONDEMNING SHIPMENTS OF NUCLEAR WASTE ACROSS THE SOUTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, on March 6, 2009, two ships named the Pacific Pintail and Pacific Heron left the port of Cherbourg in France bound for Japan. The total cargo onboard the purpose-built ships amounts to 1.8 tons, or 1,800 kilograms, of plutonium mixed-oxide nuclear fuel, which according to Greenpeace, is enough to produce 225 nuclear bombs. Scheduled to arrive in May, the shipment is to travel via the Cape of Good Hope, the Southern Ocean, the Tasman Sea between Australia and New Zealand, and the southwest Pacific Ocean.

The latest shipment of plutonium mixed-oxide nuclear fuel is part of an ongoing process involving several major countries in Europe and Japan, whereby Japan usually supplies spent fuel from commercial reactors in return for MOX nuclear fuel from Europe. Using a procedure known as reprocessing, plutonium and uranium are extracted from highly radioactive products contained in the spent fuel. Most of the extracted plutonium, along with the nuclear waste, will eventually be returned to the country of origin.

Mr. Speaker, this latest shipment of MOX fuel complements earlier shipments of spent fuel, about 170, from Japan to Europe. As usual, plans for this latest shipment, the largest so far, were covered in shrouds of secrecy, without prior consultation or notification of en route states. Yet any action involving the ships or their cargo could have catastrophic consequences on the environment and the populations of en route states. Moreover, with the increasing threat of piracy, the transported plutonium MOX fuel could easily fall into the hands of terrorists.

This unnecessary and unjustifiable shipment provides another example of the unacceptable risks and adverse impact the use of nuclear power and nuclear materials have on the environment and the lives of those involved. It demonstrates once again the best example of arrogance and imperialistic behavior of some major countries at the expense of others.

In 1995, I accompanied Mr. Oscar Temaru, the current president of French Polynesia, on the Greenpeace Warrior, which took us to Moruroa to protest French nuclear testing. At the time, while the world turned a blind eye, the newly elected president of France, Jacques Chirac and the French government broke the world moratorium on nuclear testing and exploded eight more nuclear bombs at the Pacific atolls of Moruroa and Fangataufa in Tahiti. Adding insult to injury, President Chirac stated that nuclear explosions would have no effect on the ecological environment.

Mr. Speaker, history shows that for some 30 years the French government detonated approximately 218 nuclear devices at Moruroa and Fangataufa atolls in French Polynesia. About 10,000 Tahitians are believed to have been severely exposed to nuclear radiation during French nuclear testing.

Our own U.S. Government contributed to this grim history of nuclear testing in the South Pacific. Indeed, one may argue that it was the nuclear testing program in the Marshall Islands that set the precedent for France to follow suit and use the Pacific Islands as testing grounds for nuclear bombs. Between 1946 and 1958, the United States detonated 67 nuclear bombs in the Marshall Islands, including the first hydrogen bomb, or the Bravo shot, which was 1,300 times more powerful than the bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima. Acknowledged as the greatest nuclear explosion ever detonated by the United States at the time, the Bravo shot decimated six islands and produced a mushroom cloud 25 miles in diameter. It has been said that if one were to calculate the net yield of the tests conducted by our government in the Marshall Islands, it would be equivalent to the detonation of 1.7 Hiroshima nuclear bombs every day for 12 years.

Mr. Speaker, such was the magnitude of the devastation that threatened the Marshall Islands. In addition to the annihilation of the surrounding environment and ecological system, the U.S. nuclear testing program exposed the people of the Marshall Islands to severe health issues and genetic irregularities for generations to come. It was so serious that we had to move our nuclear testing program, this time conducted underground in the deserts of Nevada. What happened was that this nuclear cloud that came from the Pacific Ocean went as far as Minnesota and Wisconsin, with contaminants later found in milk products coming out of Wisconsin as well as Minnesota.

Mr. Speaker, something needs to be done about the shipment of this nuclear waste from Europe to Japan. I sincerely hope that my colleagues will help me develop legislation.

Mr. Speaker, on March 6, 2009, two ships named the Pacific Pintail and Pacific Heron, left the port of Cherbourg in France bound for Japan. The total cargo onboard the purpose-built ships amount to about 1.8 tonnes (1800 kilograms) of plutonium mixed-oxide (MOX) nuclear fuel, which according to Greenpeace, enough to produce 225 nuclear bombs. Scheduled to arrive in May, the shipment is to travel via the Cape of Good Hope, the Southern Ocean, the Tasman Sea between Australia and New Zealand and the southwest Pacific Ocean.

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Moruroa to protest French nuclear testing. At the time, while the world turned a blind eye, the newly elected President of France, Jacques Chirac and the French government broke the world moratorium on nuclear testing and exploded 8 more nuclear bombs at the Pacific atolls of Moruroa and Fangataufa in Tahiti. Adding insult to injury, President Chirac stated that nuclear explosions would have no effect on the ecological environment.

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Such was the magnitude of the devastation that threatened the Marshall Islands. In addition to the annihilation of the surrounding environment and ecological system, the U.S. nuclear testing program exposed the people of the Marshall Islands to severe health issues and genetic irregularities for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, at this critical point in our history when the global community is confronted with tough decisions concerning energy resources for future generations, it is important to remind ourselves of the lessons of the past.

I am inspired by President Obama's recent decision concerning the storage of nuclear waste in Yucca Mountain, Nevada. In cutting funding to the Yucca Mountain project, President Obama made good on a campaign promise. But more significantly, he reignites the debate on a controversial issue: how to move and store the Nation's radioactive wastes?

To understand the President's recent decision, I am reminded that as a U.S. Senator in 2007, he then wrote in the Las Vegas Review-Journal that "states should not be fairly burdened with waste from other states." Moreover, "every state should be afforded the opportunity to chart a course that addresses its own interim waste storage in a manner that makes sense to that state."

From the above statement, one may infer that President Obama's decision to terminate funding to the Yucca Mountain project underlines the high risks and danger involve with the storage and transportation of nuclear wastes and nuclear materials.

Mr. Speaker, I believe a similar framework should apply to the international treatment of nuclear waste and nuclear materials. Each nation should be responsible for its own interim waste storage and avoid shipments of nuclear waste and nuclear materials across oceans and territorial waters of other nations.

I support a moratorium on all international shipments of nuclear fuel and nuclear waste until the international community has in place an agreement to ensure the protection of our oceans and the environment, economy and population of coastal and small island states. Such an agreement should include prior notification and consultation of en-route states before shipment of all hazardous and radioactive materials, environmental impact assessments, a satisfactory liability mechanism and protection from terrorism attacks.

Until such system is in place, Europe, Japan and all nuclear states, should keep their nuclear materials and waste in their own backyard, and not endanger the lives of others.

[From USA Today, Mar. 17, 2009]

RESPONSIBILITY? YUCCA CHOICE SQUANDERS $8B INVESTMENT

We usually applaud politicians who keep their campaign promises, but one we were hoping President Obama would forget was his pledge to end the 22-year effort to build a nuclear waste repository inside remote Yucca Mountain in Nevada.

Like it or not, the nation needs nuclear power as a carbon-free bridge to a future in which wind, solar and other options will power computers and TVs and charge plug-in hybrid cars. It makes sense to dispose of spent nuclear fuel in a single place instead of at more than 100 nuclear plants around the country, where it is now. Yucca was the presumed central location until the president's "new era of responsibility" budget would eliminate virtually all funding. Never mind that environmental objections to the project have long seemed strained and the logic for going forward strong.

Now the government has to find some other way to fulfill its contract with nuclear utilities to take the waste off their hands. Since 1983, the government has levied a fee on every kilowatt hour of nuclear-generated electricity—guess who's been paying that, ratepayers—to finance a national disposal site. The feds have collected about $30 billion and spent almost $8 billion on the Yucca Mountain site. So much for that investment.

During the presidential campaign, candidate Obama said he wanted no new nuclear plants until there was some place to store the waste, a stance that seems ominous now that he's killed off the only central disposal site. When we asked the Energy Department if that means no new nuclear plants until there's a successor to Yucca Mountain, we got a carefully hedged non-answer: "The president remains committed to resolving key issues including nuclear waste, non-proliferation and plant security."

Yucca's demise shouldn't be an excuse to delay new nuclear plants. Storing spent fuel at existing plant sites is a second-best solution, but it's a safe enough stopgap until the nation agrees on a permanent disposal site. Once spent fuel has cooled enough to move, it's typically stored outdoors in steel pods that weigh 100 tons or more, emitting little radiation and virtually impossible to destroy or steal.

The president and the nuclear industry now want a group of experts to convene to decide what do next. An idea to revisit is reprocessing spent fuel, which President Carter banned out of security concerns that seem much less compelling 30 years later. Reprocessing allows fuel to be re-used and shrinks the ultimate amount of spent fuel—but what's left still has to go somewhere.

One potential site is in New Mexico, which in the past decade has quietly accepted more than 7,000 shipments of radioactive material from the nation's nuclear weapons facilities and buried them in a salt bed almost half a mile below the desert in the southeastern part of the state. By law, the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant can't accept spent fuel from nuclear power plants, but some state officials have agitated for a second facility there as a backup for Yucca. It might be an alternative worth pursuing.

Killing Yucca is a big political win for Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and other Nevada lawmakers who've long opposed the storage site. But that victory empowers not-in-my-backyard politicians in every state to dig in their heels. And, whether it's waste dumps or wind farms or oil refineries or air routes, they do—the national interest be damned.

When Obama lifted the ban on stem cell research last week, his press secretary said the president made it clear that "politics should not drive science." Unfortunately, that's exactly what happened here.

YUCCA PLAN POSES 'GRAVE' RISK

(By Harry Reid and John Ensign)

We applaud President Obama's bold decision to scale back the budget for the proposed Yucca Mountain nuclear waste dump. Permanently ending the project is right not just for our state but for our entire country.

The peril of storing 70,000 tons of the nation's toxic trash just an hour's drive from Las Vegas rightly worries Nevadans, and all Americans would face a grave threat from this bad idea.

The reasons for ending the taxpayer boondoggle are plentiful: supporting data that relies on flawed science; estimated costs of nearly $100 billion; and the egregious error of burying waste that could, with American innovation, be less dangerous and even be turned into energy.

The Department of Energy's plan to store deadly nuclear waste at Yucca ignores even the most glaring facts, such as the major earthquake fault lines running across the storage site. Many Americans are unaware that DOE concedes that water will flow through the dump, eventually carrying radiation into Nevada's groundwater.

Yucca Mountain, simply put, is bad policy that is wrong for America.

America still needs a scientifically sound and responsible policy to deal with nuclear waste. More taxpayer money dumped into the Yucca Mountain project is more money wasted that could have been invested in securing waste on nuclear plant sites in dry casks, while researching new technologies such as reprocessing. There are solutions.

That is why we are working together and with our colleagues on bipartisan legislation to form a commission exploring alternative approaches. The Obama administration and the nuclear energy industry have expressed support for reviewing our nation's approach to nuclear waste so we will no longer be stuck with the current failed policy.

Forming such a commission would be only a first step away from Yucca Mountain. It's an important and necessary step, though. The effort will require input not only from our nation's foremost authorities on nuclear energy and nuclear waste, but also from policymakers, environmental experts and public health and safety advocates.

The time is now to put Yucca Mountain to rest and work together to deal with nuclear waste concerns while also protecting the health, safety and security of all Americans. We look forward to working with President Obama and all stakeholders in resolving our country's nuclear waste issues.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the