



# Briefing Notice

## Decommissioning: A New Era in the U.S. Nuclear Power Industry; a Critical Need for Congressional Oversight

Monday, May 13 | 2 PM – 3:30 PM

Room 2318, Rayburn House Office Building

Please RSVP to expedite check-in: [www.eesi.org/051319nuclear#rsvp](http://www.eesi.org/051319nuclear#rsvp)

Live webcast will be streamed at: [www.eesi.org/livecast](http://www.eesi.org/livecast)

The **Environmental and Energy Study Institute** (EESI) invites you to a briefing on the new era of the U.S. nuclear power industry as its electricity generation winds down and decommissioning of nuclear power plants ramps up. Decommissioning is the process of dismantling a closed plant, securing or removing its radioactive waste, and lowering a site's residual radioactivity. Getting it right is critical to communities' health and safety. Getting it wrong could pose existential threats.

The U.S. civilian nuclear fleet is aging out. As civilian reactors approach the end of their operating lives, their economics have been undercut by less expensive natural gas-fired generation. Even though nuclear owners are demanding state subsidies to keep some aging plants open a while longer, it will not stop the coming wave of closures. Six reactors have shut down since 2013. Another 15 are slated to close by 2025. Most of the civilian reactor fleet will inevitably close over the next 20 years.

As plants close, previously profitable assets become liabilities owners are eager to offload. Enabled by recent legislative and regulatory changes, private companies (chiefly Holtec International's joint venture with the Canadian firm SNC-Lavalin and NorthStar's joint venture with French subsidiary Orano, formerly Areva) are stepping in to acquire the plants, taking over their licenses, liability, decommissioning funds and waste contracts. Their business model is to decommission as quickly and inexpensively as possible, claiming any remaining decommissioning funds as profit. Economic incentives encourage them to pack highly radioactive spent fuel into thin-walled dry storage canisters not designed for the decades or centuries of storage that may be needed. Absent a geologic repository, the companies plan to ship high-level nuclear waste to Consolidated Interim Storage (CIS) sites – one owned by Orano in Texas and another by Holtec in New Mexico.

There is currently little opportunity for meaningful input from citizens, municipalities or states into the companies' decisions on decommissioning, nuclear waste, or use of ratepayer-financed decommissioning funds. Yet more than 80 reactor communities and communities near waste storage sites, plus countless communities along proposed radioactive waste transport routes (which traverse 75 percent of Congressional districts), will be profoundly affected by those decisions.

Waste transport, CIS and the emerging privatized model of decommissioning and waste stewardship raise dilemmas and potential safety threats that have yet to be solved, or in some cases adequately studied. Even so, Congress will be called upon this year to decide on legislation and appropriations regarding CIS, Yucca Mountain and other key issues related to decommissioning. Congress has the power to require studies and stronger oversight of decommissioning.

To explore these issues, distinguished experts including regulators, independent scientists, NGO advocates, and representatives of affected communities, will speak and answer questions at the briefing. They include:

- **The Hon. Greg Jaczko**, former Chair of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission
- **Rear Admiral Len Hering, Sr. USN (Ret.)**, safety expert and leading voice for proper waste management of the decommissioning process at San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station in southern California
- **Leona Morgan**, co-founder of Nuclear Issues Study Group, Diné or "Navajo" community organizer and leading advocate from communities in New Mexico impacted by CIS and uranium mining
- **Bemnet Alemayehu**, staff scientist and radiation health expert, Natural Resources Defense Council
- **Marvin Resnikoff**, Senior Associate, Radioactive Waste Management Associates, international consultant on radioactive waste management issues
- **Kevin Kamps**, Radioactive Waste Specialist, Beyond Nuclear
- **Mary Olson (moderator)**, Director of Nuclear Information and Resource Service Southeast

*This briefing is cosponsored by Beyond Nuclear, Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Natural Resources Defense Council, Nuclear Energy Information Service, Nuclear Information and Resource Service, Riverkeeper, the Samuel Lawrence Foundation, and other participating groups.*

**This event is free and open to the public. Contact Amaury Laporte at [alaporte@eesi.org](mailto:alaporte@eesi.org), (202) 662-1884.**

