January 16, 2019

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Charles E. Schumer
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Funding for Yucca Mountain and Legacy Defense Nuclear Waste Disposal

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Senator Schumer,

The Energy Communities Alliance, the only association of local elected officials in the communities hosting or adjacent to U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) sites, is writing to express our concern that funding for Yucca Mountain is again threatened without any alternative to dispose of the nation’s defense high-level nuclear waste and spent nuclear fuel. We urge you and your colleagues to address this issue with the urgency it deserves and to ensure that the federal government commits to its responsibility and to pursuing a solution.

Defense high-level waste was created primarily to support the defense of our country, and our communities have consistently supported those efforts. The DOE and NNSA sites that currently produce, previously produced, store and process defense nuclear waste shape our communities, presenting local leaders with unique health, safety and community development concerns. Our communities have operated in good faith based on federal law, as codified in the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, that the sites would not become permanent waste storage sites, and defense waste would ultimately be disposed of in a geologic repository. However, with politics rather than science driving policy, our communities, especially including those around the West Valley Demonstration Project in New York, have become – and look to remain – de facto interim storage sites they were never intended to be.

A geologic repository – whether at Yucca Mountain or elsewhere – is essential to the final disposal of the country’s high-level waste and is integral to the success of DOE’s Environmental Management program (currently the federal government’s third largest liability). Billions of taxpayer and ratepayer dollars already have been spent on the Yucca project and it remains current law. The material must go somewhere. Congress should provide funding to finish the licensing process in pursuit of confirming it is safe or even lessons learned, but ultimately to fulfill its commitment to our communities that have long supported the nation’s national security mission.
Sincerely,

[Signature]

County Executive Ron Woody  
Roane County, TN  
ECA Chair

Cc: Mayor Steve Young; City of Kennewick, WA; ECA Vice-Chair;  
   Mayor Rebecca Casper; Idaho Falls, ID; ECA Secretary;  
   Councilmember David Izraelevitz; Los Alamos County, NM; ECA Treasurer;  
   Councilwoman Jennifer Chandler; ECA Member-At-Large;  
   Councilmember Chuck Smith; Aiken County, SC; ECA Past-Chair;  
   ECA Board of Directors;  
   Seth Kirshenberg, ECA Executive Director;  
   Kara Colton, ECA Director of Nuclear Policy;  
   Megan Casper, ECA Program Manager