



## 5. **YUCCA MOUNTAIN: House Science chairmen press NRC for answers on nuclear waste storage** (02/11/2011)

**Jenny Mandel, E&E reporter**

Republican leaders on the House Science, Space and Technology Committee are flexing their new oversight muscle by pressing the Nuclear Regulatory Commission on efforts to close out a license review for nuclear waste storage at Yucca Mountain.

In a [letter](#) dated yesterday and sent to each of the five NRC commissioners, four Republican leaders on the House panel -- Chairman Ralph Hall of Texas, Vice-Chairman James Sensenbrenner of Wisconsin, Investigations and Oversight Subcommittee Chairman Paul Broun of Georgia and Energy and Environment Subcommittee Chairman Andy Harris of Maryland -- requested the release of a safety evaluation report on the project.

"Public disclosure of the report and the NRC staff's key findings is necessary to ensure fully informed consideration of science and technology policy issues surrounding this matter," the lawmakers wrote.

The requested document, the third volume of the "Safety Evaluation Report Related to Disposal of High-Level Radioactive Wastes in a Geologic Repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada," is overdue.

NRC staff testified before the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board last summer that it would be published shortly after an August drafting deadline, according to the letter, but it has yet to be released.

NRC Chairman Gregory Jaczko in October ordered commission staff to cease all work on the high-level waste program after DOE withdrew its application for a review, which the lawmakers conjectured was the grounds for failing to publish the safety evaluation report.

The Energy Department's application withdrawal is currently under court review to resolve whether the executive branch can take that step without congressional approval ([E&ENews PM](#), Dec. 10, 2010).

In December, the Yucca Mountain Licensing Board issued an order chastising NRC for its delay in issuing the safety evaluation report, calling the revised publication schedule "indeterminate."

The lawmakers yesterday called on NRC leadership to immediately release the contested report and asked them by Feb. 24 to provide a series of documents relating to NRC's actions to end review of the license application for the Yucca Mountain repository and to inform them of the status of future volumes of the safety evaluation report.

Eliot Brenner, NRC's director of public affairs, confirmed the agency had received the letters. "We will take the request under advisement and reply in due course," he said.

[Click here](#) for the committee letter.

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