

Hot Waste, Cold Cash

*Nuclear industry PAC contributions
and the senators who love them*

May 2002

**Public Citizen's
Critical Mass Energy and Environment Program**



Public Citizen is a nonprofit consumer advocacy organization based in Washington D.C.
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Summary

This summer, the U.S. Senate will vote on whether to ship high-level nuclear waste to Yucca Mountain, Nevada. The site selection process has been subjected to overbearing nuclear industry influence from the start, and the Department of Energy's bias in favor of the project, scientific evidence or lack thereof notwithstanding, has been documented time and again. The more scientists learn about the Yucca Mountain, the less they want to ship waste there. And the more that people hear about transporting nuclear waste through their neighborhoods and past their homes, the more fearful they are that the government is putting special interests ahead of public health and safety.

But the nuclear power industry counters facts and science by spending lavishly to influence members of Congress. And the industry boasts about it.

Public Citizen's Critical Mass Energy and Environment Program analyzed PAC contributions from members of the Nuclear Energy Institute, the nuclear industry's lobbying association, made to current U.S. Senators over the last two campaign cycles and through Feb. 28 of the 2002 election season. Among the report's findings:

- Senators have accepted \$5.24 million from the nuclear energy PACs. Senators and a handful of leading senatorial candidates have taken \$1.3 million from the PACs so far in 2002 alone.
- Only seven current senators have received no money from the PACs.
- Alaska Republican Sen. Frank Murkowski, ranking minority member of the Senate Energy Committee, received more nuclear PAC money than any other senator. He was followed, in order, by:
 - Sen. Rick Santorum, R-Pennsylvania;
 - Sen. Conrad Burns, R-Montana;
 - Sen. Robert Smith, R-New Hampshire;
 - Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-New Mexico;
 - Sen. Chuck Hagel, R-Nebraska;
 - Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-Louisiana;
 - Sen. George Voinovich, R-Ohio;
 - Sen. Christopher Bond, R-Missouri;
 - and Sen. Mark Crapo, R-Idaho.
- Of the Senate's 20 leading recipients of nuclear PAC money, eight serve on the Senate Energy Committee and six sit on the Environment and Public Works Committee. Both are key committees for legislation related to nuclear power. The top 20 also includes Senate Minority Leader Trent Lott of Mississippi.
- Thus far in the 2002 campaign cycle, Republican Rep. Lindsey Graham, who is seeking a vacant Senate seat from South Carolina, has received more nuclear industry PAC money than any other candidate for Senate, including senators who are seeking re-election.

Another Senate non-incumbent, Minnesota Republican Norm Coleman, ranks fourth in nuclear PAC money so far in the 2002 cycle.

- Republican senators and candidates for Senate receive about twice as much money from the nuclear PACs as Democrats. Of the 20 sitting senators who have accepted the most money from the nuclear PACs over the three cycles, 14 are Republicans, including the top four and eight of the top ten. Bingaman, who chairs the Senate Energy Committee, is the Democrats' top Senate recipient of nuclear PAC money.
- While nuclear power utilities feature prominently on the list of corporations that contributed the most PAC money to senators and candidates for Senate, the most total contributions by a Nuclear Energy Institute member came from General Electric, which designs and services nuclear power plants. Other leading PAC contributors among NEI's membership include Deloitte & Touche, which provides auditing services to some of the country's largest energy and utility corporations, and Enron, whose subsidiary Portland General Electric has waste stockpiled at its defunct Trojan plant in Oregon.

Politicians bristle at the suggestion that their votes can be purchased by campaign contributions.

The nuclear power industry, on the other hand, candidly boasts that campaign cash influences public policy, and the industry funnels money to candidates because "the system operates this way."

Yucca Mountain presents a wonderful opportunity for members of the United States Senate to reject the industry's cynical assertion that policy is for sale...The Senate can put public health and safety ahead of special-interest influence, vote to uphold Nevada's veto of the Yucca Mountain project and get the nation started toward finding a truly sound method of dealing with nuclear waste, a method based on science, not politics.

Or they can let the money talk.

Hot Waste, Cold Cash

Nuclear industry PAC contributions and the senators who love them

Introduction: A (Yucca) mountain of money

Political action committees of corporations that belong to the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) have contributed more than \$1.3 million to U.S. senators and Senate candidates thus far in the 2002 election cycle. With several months still to go before the November election, it appears that dues-paying members of the nuclear industry's lobbying group are well within range of the roughly \$2 million in PAC money they shelled out to senators and senator wannabes in 2000, and should in fact exceed that mark. The \$1.7 million the atomic PACs gave to the senators and those who would join it in 1998 is certain to be eclipsed in 2002.

And why not? This election season is shaping up to be watershed year for nuclear power issues. President Bush—trusty energy industry spokesman Dick Cheney at his side, and long-time nuclear utility sycophant Spencer Abraham bringing up the radioactive rear—has launched an all-out campaign to energize the long-beleaguered atomic energy industry. The administration wants to kick-start a new generation of nuclear power plants with public subsidies and “streamlined,” i.e., gutted, regulations. Cheney has declared the administration's undying admiration for, and unflinching commitment to extend, the industry's taxpayer-backed protection from the free market, otherwise known as the Price-Anderson insurance scheme.

And of course, the administration has approved the plan to ship the most dangerous man-made material in the world to Yucca Mountain, Nevada, relieving nuclear corporations of the burden of storing some of their waste, and opening the floodgates for nuclear plants to generate even more of the stuff. It's an irresponsible decision, and one the administration would have never made if nuclear waste policy was driven not by politics, but by facts:

- Yucca Mountain is not geologically fit to be a nuclear waste dump. That's why the Department of Energy, in violation of the federal law dealing with nuclear waste, declared that the site's geology needn't contain radioactivity and has quit referring to a “geologic” repository. The DOE now says that man-made containers will protect public health and the environment for tens of thousands of years, but the DOE has yet to prove that its containers won't corrode sooner—perhaps much sooner—than that.
- Yucca Mountain is on the other side of the country from the majority of nuclear power plants, meaning that as many as 100,000 shipments of radioactive waste will be shipped nearly from coast to coast over the next three decades. Even the government admits there will be crashes. The transportation casks that will be used haven't been tested. Residents of communities along likely transportation routes, surprised to learn that nuclear waste is about to be shipped past their neighborhoods, schools and homes, are beginning to realize this may not be such a great idea.
- Yucca Mountain is the only site that the government has “studied”—targeted, actually—as a nuclear waste dump. As the site continues to surprise scientists and reveal itself as an unsuitable place for nuclear waste, the government and the nuclear power industry are

obsessed with going ahead, and refuse to search for scientifically honest long-term solutions to the nation's nuclear waste problem.

Earlier this year the president brushed aside scientific concerns, transportation risks and inconvenient facts, forwarding the Department of Energy's Yucca Mountain dump designation to Congress. The nuclear power industry couldn't be happier.

But for the fondest dreams shared by nuclear power executives and their chum the president to come true, Congress has to go along. Nevada, exercising its right under federal nuclear waste law, has vetoed the president's decision. Congress can override Nevada's veto with a simple majority vote in both houses.

The Republican-controlled House has essentially rubber stamped the administration's energy agenda, and approved Bush's Yucca Mountain designation with about as much deliberation as Bush himself gave the issue, which is to say not much.

That leaves the Senate as the key battleground where public safety will go to war with nuclear industry political clout. Given that some elements of nuclear waste remain deadly for up to a quarter-million years, the vote on how to deal with that waste is arguably the most momentous vote members of the Senate will cast in their entire political careers.

The corporations that make up the nuclear industry's chief voice and lobby in Washington, the Nuclear Energy Institute, have been lavishing campaign cash on senators and candidates for Senate—not just this year, but over the past several years, whether senators were up for re-election during a particular campaign cycle or not.

Public Citizen's Critical Mass Energy and Environment Program examined PAC contributions from the Nuclear Energy Institute's members for the 1998, 2000 and 2002 cycles, as reported to the Federal Election Commission and compiled by the Center for Responsive Politics. Contribution totals for 2002 also include data from recent monthly filings with the FEC and for most PACs include contributions through Feb. 28. In total, 75 different PACs were found to have contributed a combined \$5.24 million to senators and candidates for Senate over the three campaign cycles.

While an impressive sum, the millions in PAC contributions are not near as staggering as the amount of unregulated "soft" money that has flowed to candidates through their political parties. A recent Common Cause study found that NEI's member companies had contributed more than \$28 million in soft money to candidates for both House and Senate over the past decade. And even the soft money totals pale when compared to the amount the industry spends on lobbying. Public Citizen recently reported that leading nuclear energy interests spent \$25 million lobbying federal officials in just a single year, 2000.

But unlike soft money or lobbying expenditures, "hard" money is easily linked directly to individual politicians. PACs have to name names, and PAC contributions show which senators, and who among the current crop of folks who think they're senatorial material, have benefited the most from nuclear power industry largesse.

The leader board

Nuclear Energy Institute members have distributed their PAC money broadly to senators and senatorial candidates over the years (See Appendix). Of current U.S. senators, only seven have received no NEI member PAC money over the last three election cycles—Joe Biden, D-Delaware, John Edwards, D-North Carolina, Minnesota Democrats Mark Dayton and Paul Wellstone, Pat Leahy, D-Vermont, Herb Kohl, D-Wisconsin and Strom Thurmond, R-South Carolina. (Thurmond, who turns 100 in December, is retiring at the end of this term and has reported collecting no campaign money from anywhere for several years. The deep-pocketed Kohl and Dayton bankroll their own campaigns). Another four have received \$1,000 or less—Daniel Akaka, D-Hawaii, Maria Cantwell, D-Washington, Russ Feingold, D-Wisconsin., and John Kerry, D-Massachusetts.

On the other end of the spectrum, there's Frank Murkowski. The Alaska Republican's campaign war chest has taken on a \$143,000 glow over the years thanks to atomic power. Nobody in the U. S. Senate has reaped as much money as Murkowski from NEI's member PACs over the last three campaign cycles (See Table 1). Murkowski is indisputably America's Nuclear Pac Man.

Table 1: Top 20 Senate recipients of NEI member PAC money, 1997-2002

	Senator	Money from NEI member PACs
1	Frank Murkowski, R-Alaska	\$143,582
2	Rick Santorum, R-Pennsylvania	\$122,541
3	Conrad Burns, R-Montana	\$119,600
4	Robert Smith, R-New Hampshire	\$106,500
5	Jeff Bingaman, D-New Mexico	\$99,648
6	Chuck Hagel, R-Nebraska	\$98,881
7	Mary Landrieu, D-Louisiana	\$98,000
8	George Voinovich, R-Ohio	\$97,005
9	Christopher Bond, R-Missouri	\$95,224
10	Mark Crapo, R-Idaho	\$89,530
11	Arlen Specter, R-Pennsylvania	\$84,428
12	Ernest Hollings, D-South Carolina	\$82,000
13	Trent Lott, R-Mississippi	\$79,500
14	Larry Craig, R-Idaho	\$70,500
15 (Tie)	Don Nickles, R-Oklahoma	\$70,500
15 (Tie)	Gordon Smith, R-Oregon	\$70,500
17	John Breaux, D-Louisiana	\$69,500
18	Blanche Lincoln, D-Arkansas	\$68,500
19	James Inhofe, R-Oklahoma	\$68,250
20	Charles Schumer, D-New York	\$66,841

Source: Public Citizen analysis of data compiled by Center for Responsive Politics and, for 2002, monthly and quarterly PAC filings with Federal Elections Commission.

Murkowski is also a huge supporter of the nuclear power industry. And he's the powerful ranking Republican member of the Senate Energy Committee, where energy conglomerates often find comfort, coddling and corporate welfare. Prior to last year's James Jeffords-induced Democratic takeover of the Senate, Murkowski chaired the Energy Committee. It was under his chairmanship that the committee churned out bills to speed the Yucca siting process and start shipping waste to Yucca Mountain even before the site gets built.

Murkowski concisely outlined his intellectual rationalization for the Yucca project to ABC News in 2000. “Nobody wants the waste (but) ... if you throw it up into the air, it’s got to come down somewhere,” Murkowski explained, rendering his own painstakingly researched scientific analysis of nuclear waste policy.

With Murkowski leaving the Senate at the end of this term—he aspires to continue espousing his energy policy expertise from the Alaskan gubernatorial mansion—Pennsylvania Republican Rick Santorum will be poised to take over as the nuclear industry’s most generously rewarded senator. Santorum was an early and ardent fan of the Bush/Cheney energy plan that calls for new nuclear power plants and increased reliance on nuclear power, and the senator invariably supports the nuclear industry at every opportunity.

Two more Republicans fill out the nuclear six-figure set: Conrad Burns of Montana and Robert Smith of New Hampshire. Burns serves with Murkowski on the Energy Committee. Smith is the former chair and ranking Republican on the Environment and Public Works Committee, another key stop for nuclear-related legislation.

New Mexico’s Jeff Bingaman rounds out the top five. Bingaman currently chairs the Energy Committee, and his position on the committee may explain why he received more money from NEI member PACs than any other Democrat.

Of the Senate’s 20 leading recipients of nuclear PAC money, eight serve on the Energy Committee, and six sit on the Environment and Public Works Committee. The top 20 also includes Minority Leader Trent Lott of Mississippi.

Senators pick up the vast majority of their PAC money when they’re up for re-election. Bingaman’s an extreme example, collecting every dime of his nuclear \$99,648 during the 2000 cycle, while getting nothing in 1998 and thus far in the current cycle.

But senators are taking money non-stop, even during years when their names aren’t on the ballot. For instance, when George Voinovich of Ohio was making his bid to get in the Senate in 1998, the nuclear PACs apparently liked what they saw and deposited more than \$48,000 into the Republican’s campaign account (Table 2). Only eight senatorial candidates got more atomic cash that year. Now Voinovich doesn’t have to explain to Ohio voters why he’s so enamored with nuclear power until 2004. But NEI’s member PACs have tossed nearly \$43,000 to his campaign already—in the 2002 cycle (Table 4). Financially speaking, Voinovich is the nuclear power industry’s fifth most popular candidate for Senate this year, even though he’s not on the ballot.

New Hampshire’s Robert Smith, meanwhile, is the second most popular Senate candidate among radioactive waste generators (and friends of nuclear waste generators) so far in the 2002 cycle, bagging nearly \$60,000 through February. But the nuclear power industry likes Smith so much, they unloaded cash on the Senator back in 2000. Though not on the ballot, only five other candidates for Senate sucked up more nuclear PAC money than Smith that year (Table 3).

Table 2: Top Senate recipients of NEI member PAC money, 1997-1998 campaign cycle

	Senator	Money
1	Frank, Murkowski, R-Alaska	\$111,582
2	Christopher Bond, R-Missouri	\$ 80,145
3	Mark Crapo, R-Idaho	\$74,891
4	Don Nickles, R-Oklahoma	\$69,500
5	Arlen Specter, R-Pennsylvania	\$59,428
6	John Breaux, D-Louisiana	\$57,750
7	Ernest Hollings, D-South Carolina	\$57,500
8	Bob Graham, D-Florida	\$48,787
9	George Voinovich, R-Ohio	\$48,130
10 (tie)	Blanche Lincoln, D-Arkansas	\$35,500
10 (tie)	John McCain, R-Arizona	\$35,500

Source: Public Citizen analysis of data compiled by Center for Responsive Politics.

Table 3: Top Senate recipients of NEI member PAC money, 1999-2000 campaign cycle

	Senator	Money
1	Jeff Bingaman, D-New Mexico	\$99,648
2	Conrad Burns, R-Montana	\$ 99,000
3	Rick Santorum, R-Pennsylvania	\$81,117
4	Trent Lott, R-Mississippi	\$60,000
5	Diane Feinstein, D-California	\$50,750
6	Robert Smith, R-New Hampshire	\$48,000
7	George Allen, R-Virginia	\$45,655
8	Kent Conrad, D-North Dakota	\$39,949
9	Craig Thomas, R-Wyoming	\$39,500
10	Jon Kyl, R-Arizona	\$38,000

Source: Public Citizen analysis of data compiled by Center for Responsive Politics.

Table 4: Top Senate race recipients of NEI member PAC money, 2001-2002 campaign cycle

	Senator	Money
1	Lindsey Graham, R-South Carolina	\$62,500
2	Robert Smith, R-New Hampshire	\$58,500
3	Pete Domenici, R-New Mexico	\$46,000
4	Norm Coleman, R-Minnesota	\$43,250
5	Max Baucus, D-Montana	\$43,063
6	George Voinovich, R-Ohio	\$42,875
7	James Inhofe, R-Oklahoma	\$42,750
8	Mary Landrieu, D-Louisiana	\$42,250
9	Larry Craig, R-Idaho	\$37,250
10	Gordon Smith, R-Oregon	\$35,500

Source: Public Citizen analysis of data compiled by Center for Responsive Politics and monthly and quarterly PAC filings with Federal Elections Commission.

The top atomic money-grubber so far in the 2002 election cycle isn't actually in the Senate—though he soon will be, if nuclear money has anything to say about it. Lindsey Graham is currently a congressman from South Carolina, vying to replace Strom Thurmond. Graham has cast several nuclear-friendly votes while in the House, including support for the Yucca Mountain project. Graham's opponent, Democrat Alexander Sanders, has taken a comparatively paltry \$2,500 from the nuclear industry.

Graham recently gushed that he is “very pleased” with the Department of Energy’s plans to ship weapons grade plutonium to South Carolina’s Savannah River site for processing into dangerous mixed oxide nuclear fuel to be used in Duke Energy reactors—despite the fact that Gov. Jim Hodges, increasingly concerned that the DOE can’t be trusted, is thinking about using state troopers to block the shipments from entering his state. (By speaking up, Hodges and South Carolina have incurred the brand of condescending rhetorical treatment from the Department of Energy usually reserved for Nevadans.)

Minnesota Republican Norm Coleman is another non-senator to make the list of top nuclear cash recipients this year. The former mayor of St. Paul was heavily recruited by the Bush administration to take a shot at Paul Wellstone, who has received no money from NEI member PACs and has traditionally supported clean energy alternatives to nuclear power.

Party time

Nuclear power likes Republicans. It likes Democrats, too. But it likes Republicans more. Of the 20 current senators who have raked in the most from NEI’s member PACs, 14 are Republicans, including the top four and eight of the top ten. Of the \$5.24 million contributed to senators and candidates in the 1998 and 2000 cycles and thus far in 2002 by NEI’s members, 67 percent went to Republican senators and candidates (Table 5).

Table 5: NEI members’ PAC money to senators and Senate candidates by party

Campaign cycle	Contributions to Republicans	Contributions to Democrats	Yearly totals
1997-98	\$1,211,834	\$552,212	\$1,764,046
1999-2000	\$1,443,626	\$718,910	\$2,162,536
2001-02	\$854,569	\$460,141	\$1,314,710
Total all cycles	\$3,510,029	\$1,731,263	\$5,241,292

Source: Public Citizen analysis of data compiled by Center for Responsive Politics and, for 2002, monthly and quarterly PAC filings with Federal Elections Commission.

The roughly two-to-one advantage for Republicans is consistent in each cycle: 68.7 percent in 1997-98; 66.8 percent in 1999-2000; and 65 percent so far in the current cycle.

Many things about nuclear power policy are strange, and that certainly extends to its political bedfellows. Currently, the effort to sway political and public opinion in favor of the Yucca Mountain dump has enlisted, on the one hand, Republican John Sununu, who served as chief of staff during the first Bush administration and, on the other hand, Democrat Geraldine Ferraro, who was Walter Mondale’s running mate in the 1984 presidential campaign. In its fight against

the dump, Nevada has likewise hired high-profile figures from either party—Ken Duberstein and John Podesta, chiefs of staff for Reagan and Clinton, respectively.

Yucca Mountain has of course been a central, at times dominating, issue in Nevada politics for years. Nevada Democrats have touted President Clinton's vetoes of legislation to speed up the Yucca project or establish a "temporary" dump at Yucca Mountain as evidence that their party is more inclined to protect Nevada from nuclear waste. Nevada Republicans have responded by pointing out that 1987 legislation that singled out Nevada for a permanent dump, known in the Silver State as the "Screw Nevada Bill," was sponsored by none other than a Democrat, then-Sen. Bennett Johnston. Ipso facto, screwing Nevada is a bipartisan affair, the state's Republicans contend. They were particularly keen on making that point during the 2000 presidential election, when they elicited a statement from candidate George W. Bush that any decision to ship nuclear waste to Yucca Mountain would be based on "sound science." It was roughly equivalent to a statement delivered to the state by Al Gore, and the Bush campaign along with its surrogates in Nevada gleefully boasted that Republicans and Democrats shared virtually the same position on Yucca Mountain. Of course, Bush subsequently reneged on his promise, signing off on the Yucca Mountain designation despite science characterized as "weak" (the Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board) and incomplete (the General Accounting Office).

Johnston, meanwhile, is by no means the only Democrat to support the Yucca project or nuclear power generally. In fact, during recent debate on the Senate Energy bill, an amendment to reauthorize the Price-Anderson Act, the taxpayer-backed insurance scheme that serves as the cornerstone of the nuclear industry's cradle-to-grave corporate welfare system, passed with the support of 32 Senate Democrats. Another amendment in the energy bill would entomb in federal law the Bush administration's so-called Nuclear 2010 program, which subsidizes new nuclear power plants with public money while further excluding public input as plant operators seek licensing for the plants. That amendment passed on a voice vote, without a single senator of either party speaking up against it.

And of course, those bills to force waste on Nevada in the first place have always enjoyed healthy support among Democrats as well as Republicans—hence the necessity of Clinton's vetoes.

So many—though certainly not all—Democrats and Republicans in the Senate appear equally supportive of nuclear power, and the nuclear power industry's obsession with shipping radioactive waste all over the countryside. The parties' senators and candidates for Senate don't get the same amount of campaign money from nuclear power interests. Republicans get substantially more. But judging from their votes on nuclear issues, Democrats get enough.

The big spenders

From light bulbs to Leno, at GE, they bring good things to life. But they also bring not so good things, like thousands of tons of deadly nuclear waste generated at the 34 boiling water reactors designed and serviced by GE Nuclear Energy and its affiliates. GE's advanced boiling water reactor is also featured as one of the reactor types under consideration for taxpayer subsidies as part of the Bush administration's obsession with developing new nuclear power plants.

So it's not just GE's status as one of the largest multinational conglomerates in the world that explains the company's perch atop the list of biggest PAC donors to senatorial candidates among NEI's members (Table 6). GE has a direct, long-standing and huge financial interest in nuclear power.

Table 6: NEI members making biggest PAC contributions to Senate, 1997-2002

	NEI member	PAC contributions
1	General Electric	\$559,630
2	Deloitte & Touche	\$500,039
3	Entergy	\$261,000
4	Florida Power & Light	\$256,250
5	Exelon	\$215,155
6	Enron	\$201,979
7	Edison International	\$204,346
8	Progress Energy	\$174,037
9	Southern Company	\$162,250
10	American Electric Power	\$161,000

Source: Public Citizen analysis of data compiled by Center for Responsive Politics and, for 2002, monthly and quarterly PAC filings with Federal Elections Commission.

Deloitte & Touche's membership in NEI stems from the financial service firm's Energy Resources Group. The company claims to serve "the dominant market share of Fortune 500 energy and utility companies, providing audit services to 12 of the top 25 Fortune 500 energy and utility companies." The firm's penetration within the energy sector will likely increase, thanks to current opportunities afforded the accounting firm by the implosion of Arthur Anderson.

Speaking of Enron, it's predictable that the national case study in corporate chicanery and political influence-peddling would end up on any list of leading PAC contributors. Though not typically associated with nuclear power, Enron's membership in NEI isn't just another example of the corporation spreading its tentacles in every possible direction, part of its relentless quest to be a part of every and any corporate organization that might be in a position to manipulate public policy. Enron's stake in the NEI, and in nuclear waste disposal, is much more direct than that. Enron has its own stockpile of nuclear waste at the defunct Trojan nuclear plant in Oregon. The plant is owned by Portland General Electric, an Enron subsidiary.

The rest of NEI's leading PAC contributors are among the nation's largest nuclear utilities—corporations that would dearly love to stick the U.S. government with lots of radioactive waste, make lots more of it, and stick it to the government again. A few thousand bucks to a senatorial candidate here and there surely must seem a very small price to pay, especially if it secures support for nuclear industry policies once the candidate wins and takes his seat in the Senate.

Conclusion: Defending democracy the NEI way

“The last time I checked this was a democracy...The system operates this way.”

—NEI spokesman Mitch Singer defending \$30 million in soft money contributions from NEI members over the last decade, *Las Vegas Sun*, March 14, 2002.

“We live in a democracy and our industry has a right to have an input into the process just as everyone else has...”

—NEI spokesman Steve Kerekes defending \$25 million spent by leading nuclear corporations to lobby Congress in 2000, *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, April 2, 2002.

Few industries, if any, are as pampered by government as nuclear power.

Two federal agencies—the Department of Energy and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission—routinely bend to nuclear industry wishes and act as industry promotional arms. The U.S. Congress has created, and repeatedly reauthorized, a sweetheart deal insurance scheme that coaxes nuclear investment in the short term and shields plant owners from liability in the event of a radioactive accident—at taxpayers’ expense. Billions of dollars in direct subsidies have flowed to the industry over the decades, with more in the works. State regulators have shifted billions of dollars of nuclear industry debt to consumers in the course of electricity industry deregulation.

And nuclear industry clout usurped science as the driving force behind national nuclear waste policy long ago.

But the more scientists learn about Yucca Mountain, the less they want to put nuclear waste there. The Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board has called the Department of Energy’s scientific conclusions “weak to moderate.” A General Accounting Office report last December asserted that nearly 300 scientific questions have yet to be answered about the mountain—questions that even the normally submissive Nuclear Regulatory Commission says must be answered before the DOE can even apply to get the dump licensed. Obviously, the DOE’s site recommendation is premature, the GAO said, reiterating its December findings in testimony to a House panel in April.

Faced with growing concern about the risks of nuclear waste transportation, the industry and its political cronies, especially Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham, have embarked on a disinformation campaign. Shamelessly attempting to exploit the Sept. 11 tragedy, Abraham contends that the public will be safer from the potential threat of an attack on nuclear waste if the waste is consolidated in one location rather than distributed at reactor sites around the nation.

But nuclear waste takes five years to “cool” before it can be handled for shipment, and there will always be tons of deadly radioactive waste at operating nuclear reactors. Shipping it to Yucca Mountain merely creates additional points of vulnerability, enriching the target environment—in effect, Yucca Mountain increases the risk to the public. And Abraham knows it.

Science, reason and independent findings from groups such as the Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board and the GAO are ample grounds for the Senate to uphold Nevada's veto of the Yucca Mountain designation. Common sense dictates that instead of shipping waste to the obviously wrong location, policymakers should break free of their single-minded tunnel vision and do what has never been done: start a scientifically honest search for the best possible long-term solutions to the nation's deadly radioactive waste problem.

Politicians bristle at the suggestion that their votes can be purchased by campaign contributions. The nuclear power industry, on the other hand, candidly boasts that campaign cash influences public policy, and the industry funnels money to candidates because "the system operates this way."

Yucca Mountain presents a wonderful opportunity for members of the United States Senate to reject the industry's cynical assertion that policy is for sale. Senators can show the industry, and the country, that they're big enough to take large amounts of money from an industry and still turn around and vote against that industry on the Senate floor. The Senate can put public health and safety ahead of special-interest influence, vote to uphold Nevada's veto of the Yucca Mountain project and get the nation started toward finding a truly sound method of dealing with nuclear waste, a method based on science, not political inertia.

Or they can let the money talk.

Appendix: PAC money recipients

Totals of corporate political action committee contributions received by senators and 2002 candidates for Senate from members of the Nuclear Energy Institute

Senator/Senate candidate	1997-98	1999-2000	2001-02	Total all cycles
Daniel Akaka, D, HI	0	3000	1000	4000
Wayne Allard, R-CO	2000	1000	26697	29697
George Allen, R-VA	0	45655	3000	48655
Max Baucus, D-MT	2000	8500	43063	53563
Evan Bayh, D-IN	22500	4000	17000	43500
Robert Bennett, R-UT	24500	3500	3000	31000
Joseph Biden, D-DE	0	0	0	0
Jeff Bingaman, D-NM	0	99648	0	99648
Kit Bond, R-MO	80145	5000	10079	95224
Erskine Bowles, D-NC ¹	0	0	5000	5000
Barbara Boxer, D-CA	12000	0	0	12000
John Breaux, D-LA	57750	5000	7000	69750
Sam Brownback, R-KS	17500	1000	1000	19500
Jim Bunning, R-KY	27769	10000	8500	46269
Conrad Burns, R-MT	15000	99100	5500	119600
Robert Byrd, D-WV	1000	19000	0	20000
Ben Nighthorse Campbell, R-CO	25000	500	0	25500
Maria Cantwell, D-WA	0	0	1000	1000
Jean Carnahan, D-MO ²	0	19000	10000	29000
Thomas Carper, D-DE	0	0	9000	9000
Lincoln Chafee, R-RI	0	18750	1000	19750
Saxby Chambliss, R-GA ³	0	0	29500	29500
Max Cleland, D-GA	6000	14500	22500	43000
Hillary Rodham Clinton, D-NY	0	17600	9000	26600
Thad Cochran, R-MS	0	0	32000	32000
Norm Coleman, R-MN ⁴	0	0	43250	43250
Susan Collins, R-ME	0	0	22500	22500
Kent Conrad, D-ND	2500	39949	5500	47949
John Cornyn, R-TX ⁵	0	0	14000	14000
Jon Corzine, D-NJ	0	2000	0	2000
Larry Craig, R-ID	21800	11500	37250	70550
Michael Crapo, R-ID	74891	5189	9450	89530
Tom Daschle, D-SD	32500	8000	2000	42500
Mark Dayton, D-MN	0	0	0	0
Mike DeWine, R-OH	13000	37300	0	50300
Christopher Dodd, D-CT	29700	18500	2030	50230
Senator/Senate candidate	1997-98	1999-2000	2001-02	Total all cycles

¹ Running for open seat.

² Jean Carnahan's name was not on the ballot in the Missouri 2000 election, but was appointed to the seat when her deceased husband unseated former Sen. John Ashcroft at the polls. Carnahan is on the ballot in 2002 in a special election to fill out the remaining four years of the term.

³ Challenging incumbent Max Cleland in 2002; does not include contributions made to House campaigns in 1997-98 or 1999-2000.

⁴ Challenging incumbent Paul Wellstone in 2002.

⁵ Running for open seat.

Elizabeth Dole, R-NC ⁶	0	0	12028	12028
Pete Domenici, R-NM	5500	3000	46500	55000
Byron Dorgan, D-ND	32799	3500	11000	47299
Richard Durbin, D-IL	7000	7500	10500	25000
John Edwards, D-NC	0	0	0	0
John Ensign, R-NV	7000	18500	0	25500
Michael Enzi, R-WY	2000	8000	21467	31467
Russ Feingold, D-WI	500	0	0	500
Dianne Feinstein, D-CA	1000	50750	0	51750
Peter Fitzgerald, R-IL	25000	24038	3000	52038
Bill Frist, R-TN	4500	24500	0	29000
Greg Ganske, R-IA ⁷	0	0	6676	6676
Bob Graham, D-FL	48787	2000	5000	55787
Lindsey Graham, R-SC ⁸	0	0	62500	62500
Phil Gramm, R-TX	2000	23000	17500	42500
Charles Grassley, R-IA	21000	5000	6000	32000
Judd Gregg, R-NH	17500	1000	3004	21504
Chuck Hagel, R-NE	28881	33000	37000	98881
Tom Harkin, D-IA	1000	5500	13250	19750
Orrin Hatch, R-UT	9800	20000	0	29800
Jesse Helms, R-NC	4500	1000	0	5500
Ernest Hollings, D-SC	57500	9000	15500	82000
Tim Hutchinson, R-AR	1000	1000	26400	28400
Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-TX	29000	24000	2000	55000
James Inhofe, R-OK	0	25500	42750	68250
Daniel Inouye, D-HI	11500	0	2000	13500
James Jeffords, I-VT	0	32999	0	32999
Tim Johnson, D-SD	13161	13000	33000	59161
Edward Kennedy, D-MA	8000	25500	0	33500
John Kerry, D-MA	500	0	0	500
Herb Kohl, D-WI	0	0	0	0
John Kyl, R-AZ	1000	38000	2500	41500
Mary Landrieu, D-LA	19250	36500	42250	98000
Pat Leahy, D-VT	0	0	0	0
Carl Levin, D-MI	0	300	17000	17300
Joseph Lieberman, D-CT	1714	31499	6146	39359
Blanche Lincoln, D-AR	35500	12000	21000	68500
Trent Lott, R-MS	18500	60000	1000	79500
Richard Lugar, R-IN	9500	32000	1000	42500
John McCain, R-AZ	35500	9500	0	45000
Mitch McConnell, R-KY	0	3000	18500	21500
Barbara Mikulski, D-MD	12500	3000	0	15500
Zell Miller, D-GA	0	26000	1000	27000
Frank Murkowski, R-AK	111582	19500	12500	143582
Patty Murray, D-WA	13750	2000	3000	18750
Ben Nelson, D-NE	0	15500	5000	20500
Bill Nelson, D-FL	0	17750	12728	30478
Don Nickles, R-OK	69500	1000	0	70500

⁶ Running for open seat.

⁷ Challenging incumbent Tom Harkin in 2002; does not include contributions made to House campaigns in 1997-98 or 1999-2000.

⁸ Running for open seat; does not include contributions made to House campaigns in 1997-98 or 1999-2000.

Senator/Senate candidate	1997-98	1999-2000	2001-02	Total all cycles
Mark Pryor, D-AR ⁹	0	0	6000	6000
Jack Reed, D-RI	1000	9594	13000	23594
Harry Reid, D-NV	20000	4000	2500	26500
Pat Roberts, R-KS	0	4372	11500	15872
John Rockefeller, D-WV	1000	0	30000	31000
Rick Santorum, R-PA	31432	81117	10000	122549
Paul Sarbanes, D-MD	1000	7671	0	8671
Charles Schumer, D-NY	19933	26500	20408	66841
Jeff Sessions, R-AL	5000	11500	24000	40500
Richard Shelby, R-AL	23500	19000	12500	55000
Gordon Smith, R-OR	18500	16500	35500	70500
Robert Smith, R-NH	0	48000	58500	106500
Olympia Snowe, R-ME	3000	26500	0	29500
Arlen Specter, R-PA	59428	5000	20000	84428
Debbie Stabenow, D-MI	0	20250	7000	27250
Ted Stevens, R-AK	3250	9000	23143	35393
John E. Sununu, R-NH ¹⁰	0	0	20500	20500
Jim Talent, R-MO ¹¹	0	0	1000	1000
Craig Thomas, R-WY	4000	39500	1000	44500
Fred Thompson, R-TN	1500	0	7500	9000
Strom Thurmond, R-SC	0	0	0	0
John Thune, R-SD ¹²	0	0	7000	7000
Robert Torricelli, D-NJ	6243	8000	24000	38243
George Voinovich, R-OH	48130	6000	42875	97005
John Warner, R-VA	6750	8500	17750	33000
Paul Wellstone, D-MN	0	0	0	0
Ron Wyden, D-OR	28900	0	3000	31900

⁹ Challenging incumbent Tim Hutchinson in 2002.

¹⁰ Challenging incumbent Bob Smith in Republican primary.

¹¹ Challenging incumbent Jean Carnahan in 2002.

¹² Challenging incumbent Tim Johnson in 2002; does not include contributions made to House campaigns in 1997-98 or 1999-2000.