

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 6, 2018

The Honorable John McCain
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman McCain:

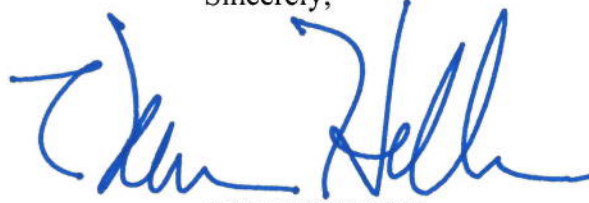
I write today to thank you for not authorizing funding for defense nuclear waste disposal at Yucca Mountain in the fiscal year (FY) 2019 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) per my request on April 13, and I respectfully request you retain this position in the final conference report. As you know, despite the Senate's repeated refusal to fund this fiscally unsound and ill-considered proposal, the House of Representatives included in its version of the FY 2019 NDAA an authorization of \$30 million to store defense nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain. This authorization is at odds with not only the Senate-passed FY 2019 NDAA, which does not authorize the program, but also the Senate-passed FY 2019 "minibus" appropriations bill, which zeroes out all funding for it. Under your leadership, you have made a point of ensuring that authorizations are not hollow, and given the program's exclusion from the recently passed FY 2019 minibus, I would respectfully request that you maintain the Senate position—no funding authorization for Yucca Mountain—throughout NDAA conference negotiations.

As I have previously stated, I firmly believe our nation cannot make any progress toward finding a viable long-term storage solution for defense high-level waste without first moving past Yucca Mountain. Beyond the long-standing fight over states' rights and the failure of this proposal to actually meet the needs of the American people, Yucca Mountain represents an irresponsible and wasteful exercise whose true cost is not hundreds of millions of dollars, but rather hundreds of billions of dollars. While U.S. taxpayers have already spent nearly \$15 billion on the repository, an additional \$82 billion would be needed to license, construct, and operate Yucca Mountain through closure, according to Department of Energy estimates. This total life cycle cost of \$97 billion is expected to be at least 15 to 20 percent higher in today's dollars and does not include the billions of dollars in legal expenses likely to result from the State of Nevada's litigation strategy.

For these reasons, I commend Senate appropriators, particularly Chairmen Shelby and Alexander, for yet again recognizing that U.S. taxpayer dollars would be better spent identifying viable alternatives for the long-term storage of nuclear waste. The only solution to our nation's long-term nuclear waste problem is one that is rooted in consent. I will continue to stand with the State of Nevada in its strong opposition to restarting licensing activities at the Yucca Mountain repository. I respectfully ask that you retain the Senate position of not authorizing funding for

Yucca Mountain in the final conference report, and I once again strongly urge you to honor the will of appropriators on this matter. Thank you for your attention to this important request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dean Heller". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dean" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Heller".

DEAN HELLER
U.S. Senator

cc: The Honorable James Inhofe, U.S. Senator