

Congressman Joe Heck  
H.R. 2609, Energy and Water Appropriations  
Yucca Mountain Amendment  
July 9, 2013

- My amendment builds on the committee's work to support scientific research and development within the Department of Energy.
- More than thirty years have elapsed since Congress passed the Nuclear Waste Policy Act and over that time technology and scientific knowledge have evolved significantly.
- However, Congress still clings to outdated technology and policy prescriptions to address today's nuclear waste issues.
- The fact Mr. Speaker, is that sticking our country's highly radioactive nuclear waste in a hole in the ground is a 20th century solution.
- Instead, we must encourage the use of 21st century technology to address this issue.
- My amendment redirects the 25 million dollars designated for the Yucca Mountain High-Level Waste Geological Repository into the High Energy Physics program within the Department of Energy's Office of Science for the development of a 21st century solution to this problem.
- The High Energy Physics program is currently researching and developing ways to use accelerator technology to reduce the toxicity of nuclear waste, transforming it into a more stable, less hazardous form.
- According to a report released by the Department of Energy, "The United States, which has traditionally led the world in the development and application of accelerator technology, now lags behind other nations in many cases, and the gap is growing."
- The report concludes that in order "To achieve the potential of particle accelerators to address national challenges will require a sustained focus on developing transformative technological opportunities, accompanied by changes in national programs and policy."
- Other countries have already made significant investments in the research and development of accelerator technology that will help make long-term storage facilities, like the facility proposed by in this bill, obsolete.
- It is time that the United States begin to make up the ground it is losing on the rest of the world when it comes to accelerator technology and begin focusing on 21st century solutions to deal with nuclear waste.
- For Nevada, the site of Yucca Mountain and the state with one of the highest unemployment rates in the country, this 21st century solution has the potential to create countless new, high-paying R&D jobs utilizing existing regional technology capabilities.
- We cannot allow the U.S. to continue falling further behind developed countries in fully funding and implementing these types of projects – 21st century solutions that are critical to maintaining our nation's economic and technological superiority.
- I urge my colleagues to embrace the future of Nuclear Waste Disposal and support my amendment to help create jobs, and restore the U.S.'s role as a leader in science and technology development.