

Op-Ed

By Lauren “Bubba” McDonald

What to do with the nation’s nuclear waste may not be the sexiest topic these days, but it is one that requires urgent attention from our nation’s lawmakers. In that regard Georgia’s entire Congressional Delegation deserves an F for a failing grade. As **mandated** by Congress, Georgia ratepayers have sent over \$1.3 billion of their money to Washington that was to be used to develop and build a nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain in Nevada by 1998. Unfortunately, as of today we are no closer to making this waste repository a reality than we were 20 years ago.

It is disappointing that Georgia’s Congressional delegation failed to speak up and protect their constituents, the ratepayers of Georgia, during the consideration of a conference committee report on the minibus appropriations bill for the Department of Energy to resume licensing for the spent fuel project. The House passed \$190 million for the Yucca project but the funding was deleted from the final conference committee report. We currently have four operational nuclear power reactors in Georgia with two more under construction. The nuclear waste from Georgia’s nuclear power plants is currently stored on site, but this storage space is not limitless and at some point other sites must be considered.

Yet not one member of our Congressional delegation spoke up in support of funding for Yucca Mountain to urge House Speaker Paul Ryan to stand firm on the House position and that of the President.

It is beyond time for our Congressional leaders in the House and the Senate to put up or shut up. I call on them to demand that the Congressional leadership include funding for the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository in future appropriations bills.

McDonald is the Chairman of the Georgia Public Service Commission