



The Secretary of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

September 11, 1996

The Honorable Don Young
Chairman, Committee on Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your April 30, 1996, letter requesting Administration support to adopt a favorable policy toward the Marshall Islands' proposal to conduct a feasibility study for the disposal of low-level nuclear waste.

The Administration position of non-support was developed through coordination with other Federal agencies and the convening of an interagency working group involving the Departments of State, Defense, the Interior, and Energy. In a July 1994 meeting, this interagency group examined this issue of disposal of spent nuclear fuel, high-level radioactive waste, and other nuclear materials. They also reviewed the proposed Marshall Islands feasibility study for a high-level nuclear waste facility. In November 1995, the interagency group convened again to review a proposed feasibility study involving only low-level nuclear waste. After each of these meetings, the Department of State verbally advised the Marshall Islands Government that the United States held a position of non-support for either the high-level or the low-level feasibility study proposals. In so doing, the United States Government also urged the Marshall Islands Government to consider the views of its regional neighbors, some of whom are on record as opposing this nuclear storage facility.

Both these decisions reflect the economic, environmental, and political problems attendant to this proposal. The Marshall Islands, as a sovereign government, could still pursue this proposal, but the United States does not have specific legal authority to participate in this proposal. We have advised the Department of State, by copy of this letter, of your interest in this proposal.

Sincerely,

Hazel R. O'Leary

cc: **The Honorable George Miller**
Ranking Minority Member

Ms. Suzanne Butcher
Director, Office of Pacific Island Affairs
Department of State