# McClure cites need to solve problem on nuclear waste

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U.S. Sen. James A. McClure, R-Idaho, chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, hailed Wedmnesday the first step toward solving the nagging problem of how to dispose of radioactive nuclear waste.

The Senate voted last week to adopt a national policy by an overwhelming 69-9 vote.

The bill provides for directing the government to find a final resting spot for nuclear waste from commercial nuclear reactors and military weapons programs.

In his special report, McClure said "among the highest priorities on the agenda for the 1982 session of Congress is the enactment of legislation establishing a program for the safe and permanent disposal radioactive waste."

Only the senators whose states could be chosen as a possible dumping sites opposed the measure.

The bill directs the Department of Energy to move toward establishing three types of nuclear disposal facilities. They include the short-term storage for spent nuclear fuel away from the site of the commercial reactor; long-term, monitored storage from which spent fuel could be retrieved for reprocessing; and permanent disposal site deep in the earth in a geologically stable area where the material could become harmless over the centuries.

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Timetables would be set for the DOE to study and recommend the permanent disposal sites. States are promised only "consultation and concurrent" rights. This leaves the decision to the federal government unless one House of Congress agrees with the state.

McClure noted the bill he sponsored, Senate Bill 1662, takes a long stride in solving the problem.

He said the principle goals of radioactive waste management are stabilization, packaging and isolation.

He added more than 90 percent of the radioactivity will decay in 10 years and less than 1 percent will remain after 100 years.

The waste has been piling up for more than 35 years, he noted. They were created by defense-related activities dating back to World War II by the operation of nuclear power plants.