

Governors Association discusses radioactive waste storage plan

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Gov. John V. Evans said Friday he will stress state participation in decisions on where to store high-level radioactive waste when he attends the National Governors Association Convention at Portland, Maine, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday.

Evans, the association's nuclear subcommittee chairman, is scheduled to discuss high-level radioactive waste management during a plenary session of the convention Monday afternoon.

Evans said in a Post-Register telephone interview from his Boise office that he has drafted a package on nuclear energy policy the 50 governors at the convention will review.

"As far as a permanent high-level radioactive repository is concerned, Idaho will join other states in helping to determine the best sites," Evans said. "I emphasize with other governors that if Idaho is identified as one for repository site, we certainly would go through the process. I don't think it is appropriate that if we had the best site that we would not do this."

He added Idaho is not one of the states identified as being qualified for such a site because of its geology. It has a high earthquake risk and much the southern part of the state lies over the huge Snake River aquifer.

"This repository is a national problem, but every state should be involved in the decision-making," he said.

He said low-level radioactive nuclear wastes are stored at the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory on an interim basis.

"Over the next number of years that interim storage should be cleaned out and appropriately

located in permanent storage," he said.

His storage proposal calls for some changes, Evans said, but it emphasizes states should take the leading role. It calls for each state's governor to designate which agency will handle this and work with the federal government.

The Idaho governor said he plans to introduce a resolution on how to provide for disposal of high-level radioactive waste for the nation's governors to approve.

Evans, who leaves Saturday for the three-day meeting, will be accompanied by Pat Costello, legal counsel; Jean Terra, press secretary; and Barbara Swaczy, legislative assistant for health, welfare and education.

Evans said federal agencies in the past have assumed a dominant role in radioactive waste policies.

He said high-level radioactive wastes that have accumulated from military activities, commercial reactors and other sources are a national responsibility, and all states generating any part of the problem need to participate in resolving it.

"The waste management program," said the governor, "cannot be solved by a federal process alone. It must be based on the principles of cooperative federalism. A strong partnership of federal, state and local government and private industry is essential to a successful program."

"Federal pre-emption of state and local responsibilities is unnecessary and counterproductive. Essential to the federal-state partnership is a system of consultation and concurrence.

"States must have opportunities for full participation in each phase of the site-selection process for all geological repositories, and interim stor-

age, monitored retrievable storage, or test and evaluation facilities. This includes potential host states and adjacent states which may be affected by releases of radioactivity from these facilities or transportation of waste to these facilities."

Evans said in addition to the Department of Energy, all other federal agencies involved in repository siting activities should provide states with appropriate opportunities for full participation in the decision-making process.

He said it's the governors' position that impact assistance should be provided to states and localities to cover costs of participation in consultation and concurrences, socioeconomic impacts and revenue losses associated with land required for all federal facilities. These would mean repositories, interim storage sites, monitored retrievable storage locations or test and evaluation facilities.

"Adequate funding for the cost of state participation in developing and implementing waste disposal programs should be provided to the states through user fees and other courses," he said. "Funding should be channelled through a single lead agency designated by the governor."

Evans said development of a project decision scheduled on repository development should involve close consultation with states to assure deadlines for accomplishment of the technical program allow sufficient time for implementing the institutional requirements of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982.

"Disposing of defense and commercial high level wastes in the same repositories will save money and reduce the number of federal repositories required," he said.