

The Honorable Shelley Berkley
U.S. Representative of Nevada (1999–2013)

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Yucca Mountain and Nuclear Waste

Representative Berkley defends her opposition of storing nuclear waste in Yucca Mountain.
Interview recorded July 22, 2019

For anybody representing Nevada, Yucca Mountain is one of the seminal issues, and that's the issue that you're going to be judged by when you go back, back to your constituents and ask them to support you the following election. The idea that Yucca Mountain would be the location of a repository for the entire nation's nuclear waste is preposterous. You need, you need to have a tremendous amount of water to cool the nuclear rods. I don't know whether people in Congress have noticed, but Nevada is in the middle of the desert, and there's no water here. We're having enough of a struggle with Lake Mead and limited water for growth. How, in heaven's name, in the middle of the desert are you going to find water in order to cool those nuclear—cool, cool the nuclear waste? It is a ridiculous concept. They chose, they chose Yucca Mountain when there was eight people here in the state of Nevada. Things have changed dramatically, and we welcome over—in addition to two and a half million people here located in the Las Vegas valley, we also welcome 40 million plus visitors every year. How are you going to protect these people from a catastrophe that happens at Yucca Mountain? And the state of Nevada does not, does not create any energy from nuclear power. So why should we be the repository for every other state that is producing energy with the use of nuclear power? You want to use nuclear power? Fine. That's your business, but then you store the waste. We're not a garbage dump. This is a place, in the state of Nevada, that over 3 million people call home. It's not our job to take everybody else's nuclear waste.