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April 7, 1997

The Honorable William Jefferson Clinton
President of the United State of America
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am most happy with the results of our cooperative efforts on several fronts. FEMA Director James Witt and his staff have done a superb job in aiding Idaho through the flooding crises we have experienced this year, and Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt showed great courage and consideration by withdrawing the proposed BLM law enforcement rules after listening to my request.

Yet while I am grateful for these efforts of your administration, there is another matter that causes me concern. I am surprised and disappointed that the EPA is throwing further roadblocks in the path toward opening the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP).

That facility is intended to take the nation's defense related transuranic waste for permanent disposal. Idaho now has more than half the nation's total of this material temporarily stored at the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Lab. The first shipment arrived in Idaho in 1954. The federal government has periodically stated that this material will be removed. These promises began in 1970 when then U.S. Senator Frank Church was assured that the material would start to leave within the decade.

When WIPP did not open in 1988, Idaho instituted a series of lawsuits against the federal government. Those lawsuits led to the 1995 settlement agreement between the federal government and the state of Idaho. The first section of that court order specifies that shipments of transuranic waste will begin leaving Idaho by April 30, 1999.

In 1996, the Idaho electorate ratified that agreement with your executive departments by soundly rejecting an initiative to cancel it. The deadline for starting those



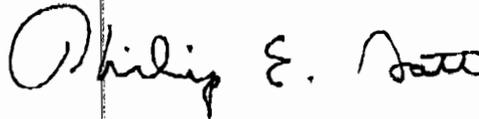
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shipments is critical to the agreement. If it is not met, Idahoans will abandon any faith in the promises of the federal government.

Nearly two billion taxpayer dollars have been spent to get WIPP ready. After 18 years of study, the National Research Council, a part of the National Academy of Sciences, recently issued a report that indicated that WIPP is a viable solution for permanently and safely disposing of radioactive transuranic waste. You signed legislation passed by Congress last year that was supposed to get WIPP opened by this fall. The Department of Energy has since provided more than 84,000 pages of documentation about WIPP to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. While DOE has repeatedly stated its commitment to getting WIPP open, EPA seems to be throwing up roadblocks by requesting even more information.

While the Yucca Mountain question will receive further debate, the WIPP issue was settled years ago. There is no justification for further pointless challenges. I urge you to bring your cabinet together on this issue.

Very truly yours,



Philip E. Batt
Governor

PEB:jas

cc: Energy Secretary Federico Pena
EPA Administrator Carol Browner
U.S. Senator Larry Craig
U.S. Senator Dirk Kempthorne
U.S. Congressman Helen Chenoweth
U.S. Congressman Mike Crapo
WIPP Manager George Dials
INEEL Manager John Wilcynski
New Mexico Governor Gary Johnson