

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 30, 2019

The Honorable Kristine L. Svinicki
Chairman
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Mail Stop O-16G4
Washington, DC 20555-0001

Dear Chairman Svinicki,

We write in strong opposition to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff proposal recommending approval of Entergy Nuclear Operations, Inc.'s request for exemptions from emergency preparedness and planning requirements for the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station following its decommissioning and before spent fuel is fully moved out of the spent fuel pools and into dry cask storage (SECY-19-0078).

This proposal would mean that Pilgrim no longer has to maintain key emergency preparations, including Emergency Planning Zones, offsite emergency response plans, connections with State and local offsite emergency staff, or procedures for public notification in the event of an emergency. If an event beyond the design basis of the Pilgrim plant was to occur, this could result in a loss of cooling to the spent fuel pools and trigger a hydrogen explosion and a release of radioactive gas—like that seen in the Fukushima Daiichi disaster.

In 2017, the NRC exempted the Pilgrim plant from requirements to implement safety upgrades that would help avoid a Fukushima-scale disaster, including the requirement to study the risks that floods and earthquakes pose to the plant site. A 2014 evaluation showed that the seismic hazard at Pilgrim exceeds the “safe shutdown earthquake” level, proving that fears of seismic damage to the spent fuel pools are legitimate.

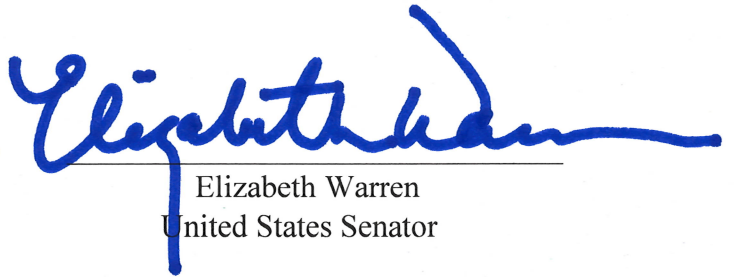
In the January 2019 meeting of all NRC employees, you stated that you view the American public as the primary customer of the NRC—an opinion to which all of the commissioners concurred. Additionally, you said, “when you think about the common defense and security, and public health and safety, it’s pretty easy to realize it’s [...] the people you’re seeing at the grocery store and in your neighborhood, those are the people we serve at the end of the day” (ML19035A679).

We strongly agree with that sentiment. The NRC should be serving and protecting the American public. However, almost every step taken in the process of decommissioning the Pilgrim plant has ignored the concerns of local stakeholders and gone against the requests of residents and their representatives. We urge you to reject the emergency preparedness exemption and maintain the offsite safety protections at Pilgrim for the benefit of the public.

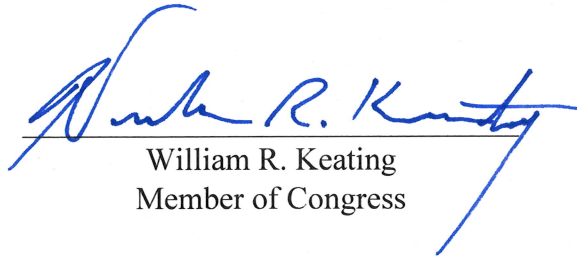
Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



William R. Keating
Member of Congress