



C.L. "BUTCH" OTTER
GOVERNOR

OPINION

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SECURING A FUTURE FOR THE IDAHO NATIONAL LABORATORY, WITHOUT PUTTING ASIDE THE PAST

By Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter

Two decades ago, Governor Cecil Andrus took on the federal government, rallying Idaho's citizens to the cause of protecting the vitally important Snake River Plain Aquifer – a sole source of water for hundreds of thousands of our citizens and an indispensable foundation of our economy.

Governor Andrus stood up to the feds over the issue of nuclear waste stored on the eastern Idaho desert, training a much-needed spotlight on many years of tension, disagreement and broken promises that put the role and future of what now is the Idaho National Laboratory in doubt.

It was a landmark beginning to a process that culminated in 1995 with Governor Phil Batt's crafting of a historic agreement with the Navy and the U.S. Department of Energy to get the waste out of Idaho. It was a signature moment in Idaho history, a pillar of public policy foresight, and the agreement itself has become as close to inviolable as public sentiment and enforcement by federal courts can possibly make it.

What's more, it was a testament to state's rights and Idaho's commitment to the kind of redress of grievances guaranteed by the Tenth and First amendments. And it was the right thing to do.

That being said, and with all due respect, Governor Andrus is tilting at imaginary windmills with his recent allegations about state and federal officials "hatching a secret scheme" to open Idaho to disposal or long-term storage of commercial spent nuclear fuel.

I'll say this as plainly and as unequivocally as I can: Idaho will NOT be a repository for nuclear waste. There is no scheme – secret or otherwise – and I have stated repeatedly and publicly that Idaho will not be the nation's nuclear dumping ground. I was lieutenant governor to both Governor Andrus and Governor Batt throughout this process, and I will continue to hold the federal government accountable under the 1995 agreement.

Some of Governor Andrus' concerns apparently stem from my recent creation of the Leadership In Nuclear Energy (LINE) Commission to study and advise me on opportunities for expansion of Idaho's

employment base – read that “MORE JOBS” – in research and development at the Idaho National Laboratory on more advanced, efficient, safer and cleaner nuclear technology.

Yet Governor Andrus contends that the State of Idaho is in league with the feds in a shady plot to “gut an agreement that protects Idaho from becoming the home for more waste.” Nothing could be further from the truth.

Perhaps he should read my Executive Order creating the LINE Commission, which I direct to “*identify appropriate roles and opportunities for the enhancement of research and development at the INL, while adhering to the long-standing position of the State of Idaho under the 1995 Settlement Agreement that the state will not be a repository for spent nuclear fuel or high-level waste.*” (Emphasis added).

Governor Batt’s agreement is safe and sound. So is Governor Andrus’s legacy in helping to bring the issue to a head. And for as long as I have a role in assuring it, so are the people of Idaho.

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