

# ECA Update: October 30, 2013

*In this update:*

**A Nuclear Cleanup Effort Leaves Questions Lingering at Scores of Old Sites**

John R. Emshwiller and Jeremy Singer-Vine, The Wall Street Journal

**Fears surface over Lake Huron nuke dump proposal**

Keith Matheny, Detroit Free Press

**Curtain to Open on Budget Conference--Then Close**

Billy House, National Journal

**Reid outlines busy November agenda in Senate, including National Defense Authorization Act**

Michael A. Memoli, Los Angeles Times

**CNN to air nuclear power documentary, PANDORA'S PROMISE, Thursday, Nov. 7**

CNN

## **A Nuclear Cleanup Effort Leaves Questions Lingering at Scores of Old Sites**

John R. Emshwiller and Jeremy Singer-Vine, The Wall Street Journal

October 30, 2013

[LINK](#)

It was a discovery that helped launch the nuclear age. On the eve of America's entry into World War II, scientists isolated plutonium in a small room in UC Berkeley's Gilman Hall. To make sure the moment wasn't forgotten, Room 307 was designated a National Historic Landmark.

As it turned out, there would be plenty of other reminders. The work left radioactive residue that forced the university to rip out an entire adjacent room in 1957, according to its own documents. A quarter-century later, while professors and students were still using the building, the school found that a dozen other rooms and some hallways were contaminated. The school cleaned those up too--only to discover this year small amounts of residue in a study room.

Carolyn Mac Kenzie, the university's radiation safety officer, says any current exposure is "well under" federal safety limits. Still, she says that before the 1980s cleanup, administrators or students there could have breathed in harmful levels. "We will never know," she says.

The contamination at Berkeley is part of the legacy of one of the most important scientific and industrial undertakings in U.S. history. During the buildup to the Cold War, the federal government turned to the private sector to help develop and produce nuclear weapons and other forms of atomic energy. Hundreds of companies and thousands of workers were pressed into service. But while it helped defend a country, this enormous endeavor has left an equally enormous--but rarely publicized--cleanup job of contamination that spans the country.

Residue, left by the routine processing as well as the occasional mishandling of nuclear material, exists in sites in almost three dozen states. Some remains in public parks, some near schools, and some in the walls, floors and ceilings of commercial buildings. Contamination has been detected on hiking trails in residential neighborhoods, in vacant city lots and in groundwater.

Federal officials say they have taken adequate measures to protect the public health and that the sites don't pose a threat to anyone living or working nearby. While some research has raised concerns, there is no conclusive evidence linking the sites to any public-health problems. In general, studies haven't pinpointed the exact relationship between exposure to low-level radiation and medical issues such as cancer.

But a Wall Street Journal investigation raises other questions about the massive government program established to handle one of the country's longest running and most expensive cleanups. Among the findings:

- Record-keeping has been so spotty that the Energy Department says it doesn't have enough documentation on several dozen sites to decide whether a cleanup is needed or not.
- Despite years of trying to track these sites, the government doesn't have the exact address for dozens of them. It acknowledges it doesn't even know what state one uranium-handling facility was located in.
- More than 20 sites initially declared safe by the government have required additional cleanups, sometimes more than once.

"What we have learned from the nuclear program is that it is a surprise when there are no surprises," says Robert Alvarez, a former senior Energy Department official during the Clinton administration.

In its investigation, the Journal sifted through tens of thousands of pages of government documents and company records; consulted property records, photographs and historical maps; and conducted interviews with hundreds of individuals, including former tenants and owners. Information from the Energy Department as well as a dozen other federal and state agencies was gathered in the search. The results of that research--covering over 500 sites--are in an online database.

Government records show that a large majority of those sites, which included factories, research centers and other facilities, handled radioactive material. Over the decades, an array of federal agencies have reviewed records to determine which sites were potentially dangerous. So far, the government has deemed about 130 sites worrisome enough to warrant a cleanup, and says it has finished work on 90 of them. Total projected cost: \$350 billion.

The Energy Department declined requests for interviews but issued a statement to the Journal saying it was "confident" it had identified all of the sites and nearly all of the contaminated areas at those locations. "We continue to evaluate these sites through environmental sampling and records searches to determine whether additional contaminated areas exist," the statement said.

The smaller sites stand in contrast to a handful of giant nuclear facilities that have grabbed national headlines--such as the 586-square-mile complex in Hanford, Wash., which officials estimate will account for \$150 billion of the total cleanup tab. But while they are far less contaminated than the Hanfords of the world, the smaller sites are closer to population centers and are harder to track through a series of private operators.

Indeed, according to the Journal's database, more than four million Americans live within a mile of one of the roughly 300 sites the Journal could pinpoint. About one million live within a half mile. Some 260 public schools are also within a half mile of a site, as are 600 public parks. Still, most current owners or occupants contacted by the Journal didn't know about the locations' past.

"Now you've got me scared," said Sal Mazzio with a nervous laugh, upon learning that his Staten Island towing company sits on a former World War II storage site for uranium ore. Federal

officials are looking at doing a cleanup there, though they say there is no imminent health risk.

"I should be thrilled that I'm in such excellent health," said JoAnn LaFon upon hearing that her Alexandria, Va., townhouse is on the site of a former factory that worked with uranium and thorium. Ms. LaFon said that to build her complex's 29 townhomes nearly 20 years ago, the developer tore down the factory and cleaned up the site. Still, she wondered if there was any remaining residue. Available records don't show the government felt the site needed a cleanup.

At a group of buildings in the 500 block of W. 20th Street in Manhattan, federal records shows that in the 1940s the Manhattan Project--the research-and-development effort that led to the first atomic bomb--stored some 300,000 pounds of uranium products in what served as warehouses at the time.

In that case, the federal inspectors in 1989 found radioactive contamination up to 38 times federally allowed levels in parts of the structures, according to a 1995 Energy Department report. After hauling off 50 drums of contaminated material recovered from vacuuming, scraping and other work, the government declared the buildings fit for "unrestricted use." The buildings are currently occupied by dozens of offices and art galleries. A woman who described herself as one of the owners but didn't give her name said she didn't know about any past contamination and declined to comment.

Determining actual risks from radiation is far from a precise science; much of it is based on long-term health studies of World War II atomic-bomb survivors in Japan. Current scientific thinking holds that even the smallest amount of additional radiation raises a person's cancer risk slightly, with the danger rising with the dose.

Generally, the relatively low levels of radiation at most old nuclear sites aren't viewed as a short-term danger. Any exposure would occur in the soil, air and groundwater. Richard Muller, professor of physics at the University of California, Berkeley, said government exposure limits are "often set so far into the safety zone nobody should worry" about them.

Cleanup responsibilities have been divided among an array of federal agencies--including the Energy Department, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Army Corps of Engineers and the Environmental Protection Agency. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health also weighs in on scores of sites under a program to compensate nuclear-weapons plant workers for radiation-linked cancers.

Still, sometimes it has taken citizens to find contamination problems. In 1978, a college geology student in Attleboro, Mass., carrying his own detection equipment discovered radioactive junk at a local landfill. That sparked a federal cleanup that was completed in 2012, three decades after the student's find. A 2011 state health study found elevated levels of a few types of cancers within a mile of the site, but said "the elevations were not statistically significant."

In the 1970s, federal officials decided that a factory in Fort Wayne, Ind., which had machined uranium for the weapons program, didn't need a cleanup. However, in 2004 a buyer of the facility found radiation there during an environmental review. That site is now slated for a government cleanup, though it isn't expected to begin for several years, officials say.

Even after being cleaned, many sites still contain residual radioactive contamination. "Cleanup does not imply that all hazards will be removed from a given site," the Energy Department said in its statement to the Journal. Often, the taint is so slight that it poses no public-health risk, government officials say. But in about 50 completed cleanups, enough contamination remains that the federal government has imposed "institutional controls," restricting how the area or facility

can be used. Such restrictions could last "for centuries or, in some cases, millennia," one Energy Department report said.

The former Mound nuclear complex in Miamisburg, Ohio, can't be used for day-care centers, elementary schools or other activities where children would spend too much time. While the government says the contamination levels don't threaten adults in offices or doing other work at what is now a technology-business park, research has shown children to be more at risk from radiation exposure.

Eric Cluxton, president of the nonprofit Mound Development Corp., says he checked with the Energy Department to make sure it was all right to let kids come to this year's annual Thanksgiving "Turkey Trot" 5-mile run being hosted by Mound. The government gave the green light.

The U.S. entered the atomic age in the 1940s, with the Franklin Roosevelt administration moving ahead with developing a nuclear bomb just before the attack on Pearl Harbor. Adding urgency, U.S. officials feared Nazi Germany was already well into its own bomb project.

The Staten Island site now being considered for cleanup was the repository for 1,200 tons of extremely high-grade uranium ore from the Belgian Congo that a European business executive had shipped to the U.S. in 1940 to keep it from the Nazis. Forty years later, federal records show, the Energy Department found residual contamination at the site. Even though the uranium had eventually been purchased for the Manhattan Project, the department decided the site didn't qualify for a federal cleanup because the ore had been owned by private companies while it sat on Staten Island.

The department said it decided to reconsider the site's eligibility at the request of other government agencies. A 2012 federal report calculated that potential radiation exposure in a relatively remote and unused corner of the property, part of which now hosts Mr. Mazzio's towing company, could be up to about 10 times current standards.

Such were the challenges of building the first bomb that Niels Bohr, the Nobel Prize-winning Danish physicist, reportedly once remarked that an entire country would have to turn itself into a factory to build the weapon. After viewing the labors and results of the Manhattan Project, Mr. Bohr concluded America had done just that.

Remnants of that remarkable effort are buried in two clearings in the thickly wooded park lands of southwestern Cook County, Ill. During World War II, the world's first nuclear reactor--which had gone into operation at the University of Chicago--was moved there. Over the ensuing decade, a 19-acre, 35-building complex, including a second reactor, rose around it.

Officials dismantled the place in the 1950s. They dumped parts of the two reactors, helped by some well-placed explosives, into a ditch 100 feet wide by 40 feet deep. The hole was then "filled, leveled and landscaped," said an Energy Department document. This "Site A" is less than a third of a mile from "Plot M," a nearly a half-acre burial plot holding contaminated building debris, equipment and clothing.

Over the years, radioactive tritium turned up in groundwater, including some at a nearby picnic site; officials monitoring the tritium say it doesn't pose a health threat. In 1990, state workers discovered above ground uranium metal, concrete rubble, protruding pipes and elevated radiation levels at Site A. That prompted a federal cleanup. Erosion from bicyclists riding over Plot M is a continuing issue, according to a 2012 Energy Department report.

On weekends, several dozen people might pass by the sites, said James Phillips, a biologist for the Forest Preserve District of Cook County on a walk to them past stands of oak and maple

trees amid the din of cicadas. "It's amazing to think that Einstein, Oppenheimer and Fermi" might have walked in the same woods, he said, referring to three pioneers of the nuclear age. Mr. Phillips said some winter visitors claim that because of heat from radioactive contamination snow doesn't gather at Plot M, but he dismissed that as urban legend.

A stone monument at Site A proclaims the resting place of "The World's First Nuclear Reactor." The stone cube at Plot M carries a more ominous message: "Caution--Do Not Dig. Buried in this area is radioactive material from nuclear research." The message adds: "There is no danger to visitors," though some passing editor chiseled off the word "no." Cook County officials say they are working on a campaign to attract more visitors by better publicizing the sites and their role in history.

The Manhattan Project's urgency and secrecy--carried over during the Cold War struggle with the Soviet Union--"made it possible to give short shrift to complaints other industries would have to face, such as pollution and health issues," says John Applegate, an environmental-law professor at Indiana University who served on an Energy Department cleanup advisory board during the Clinton administration.

In the 1980s, a public outcry began rising over such health and safety issues. One turning point, say current and former government officials, came in the small Ohio town of Fernald, where a big federal complex processed weapons-related uranium. Worker complaints of unsafe plant conditions, coupled with radioactive contamination found in nearby drinking wells, drew national attention.

Joseph Fitzgerald, a former senior Energy Department official, toured Fernald in 1985. "The entire plant was contaminated. There were piles of uranium on the floor," he recalls. Ultimately, Fernald underwent a \$4.4 billion cleanup, prompted in part by the ardent interest of then-Sen. John Glenn, who became an outspoken advocate for cleaning up weapons contamination nationally. In a recent interview, the former senator said, he concluded Fernald had been "just the tip of the iceberg."

Today, even nuclear critics say Fernald is among the most successful cleanups to date. Part of the 1,050-acre site is a nature preserve and visitors center. Still, there is also a 65-foot-high mound containing mildly radioactive debris and a plant to remove contamination from groundwater. A flier warns hikers not to handle anything resembling construction debris--in case it is a fragment from the old nuclear complex.

In 1989, the Energy Department agreed to pay more than \$70 million to settle a lawsuit by residents near the plant who said the facility had caused emotional distress and diminished property values. The agency didn't admit to any proof of harmful effects, but the settlement did fund long-term medical monitoring by researchers at the University of Cincinnati and a local medical center. Last year, they reported "a higher than average rate" of lupus among people who lived near the former plant and said more investigation was needed.

The end of the Cold War contributed to some reordering of nuclear priorities. In the 1990s, annual spending on nuclear-weapons cleanup for the first time surpassed the nuclear-weapons budget. The department began declassifying documents and making more site-related information available.

A small part of the billions going annually to the overall cleanup went to a program to address the hundreds of privately owned locations that had taken part in the nuclear-weapons drive. It went by the bureaucratic name of Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program, or Fusrap.

Begun in 1974, Fusrap was considered something of a backwater, say many former officials. Through 1997, Fusrap's annual budget never topped \$75 million, though it was responsible for

cleaning up several dozen sites. Fusrap "never had enough money to do the job," says Graham Mitchell, a former Ohio state environmental regulator involved in nuclear cleanups.

In 1997, Congress took the program away from the Energy Department and gave it to the Army Corps of Engineers. Congress raised the annual Fusrap budget to about \$140 million, where it pretty much stayed until each of the last two years, when it was cut to about \$100 million. Fusrap has some two dozen pending projects, including at least one that could cost up to \$500 million.

Fusrap has had challenges besides funding. When one former Energy Department official learned the Journal was seeking addresses for the hundreds of company locations, he let out a brief laugh. "Huh, good luck." He recounted how department officials during the 1980s and 1990s had engaged in a similar search. Many of the addresses in government records were for a company's headquarters rather than the actual nuclear work sites. (Part of the Journal database cites Fusrap findings.) Some locations had addresses on streets that no longer existed. "We were not able to assess all the sites," he said.

One that went missing was Transcontinental Machine & Tool, which did uranium metal machining, according to a 1951 government document. The Energy Department says it hasn't found a record of the city or even the state where Transcontinental operated. "Although there is some potential for contamination, the location of the site is unknown and therefore the site cannot be surveyed," said a 1990 DOE report. Based on experiences at other uranium-machining shops, the contamination worry was low, the report added. (A 1941 article in an online newspaper archive mentions a Transcontinental Machine & Tool in New York City.)

Some sites have undergone multiple cleanups. For years, the Acid Canyon area in New Mexico served as a dumping spot for the nearby Los Alamos National Laboratory. In the 1960s, federal records show, the government removed plutonium and other contaminants from the canyon and transferred the land to Los Alamos County, which turned it into a public hiking and recreation area.

In the 1970s, the government found more contamination and did another cleanup. In the late 1990s, state officials found yet more contamination. According to news reports at the time, the Energy Department brought in a truck-mounted vacuum and removed several hundred cubic yards of soil. The work was needed, the Energy Department said, because rainstorms sometimes uncover more radiation, but that removing all the contamination would mean stripping vegetation and soil, impacting the ecosystem there. The area is safe for recreation, the department added.

Middlesex, N.J., a hamlet of about 14,000 people, 30 miles from New York City, is also facing its third round of cleanup. In the late 1940s, the Atomic Energy Commission dispersed contaminated material from a nearby nuclear-weapons facility over 5 acres of a municipal landfill there, according to federal records.

In 1960, citizens practicing civil-defense drills with Geiger counters discovered radiation readings up to 50 times natural background levels. After a cleanup, the government cleared the property for public use. Part of it became home to the Middlesex Presbyterian Church. In the mid-1970s, federal officials found more contamination about 400 feet from the church and did another cleanup. Neal Presa, current pastor at the church, said federal officials have assured him there isn't any danger to his flock.

In 2001, the borough of Middlesex, looking to develop part of the site into a recreation area, discovered yet more contamination, this time at an end of the property away from the church but near a residential street. Twelve years later, the Army Corps of Engineers is looking at doing another cleanup at this new spot. It says there isn't any imminent risk to the public.

Ronald Dobies, mayor of Middlesex for most of the years since 1980, sat in his small office

recently and recounted the town's nuclear history while pointing at boxes and files containing atomic-related papers. City Hall is a stone's throw from the landfill, which is largely overgrown with shrubs and weeds and fenced in--though a gate at the end of the site near the latest contamination discovery stood askew on a recent visit.

In 1983, Mr. Dobies told a federal nuclear advisory panel "it is difficult to express the fears of our citizens in a short presentation." Today, the mayor is less worried about possible health threats. Still, he said, "I am a little surprised that they didn't get all the radiation out" in the past.

The weapons-related work at UC Berkeley's Gilman Hall created contamination headaches from early on, according to documents obtained under a public-records act request. A 1957 university report recounts that contamination in room 309, next to room 307 where plutonium was discovered, was so bad the "ceilings, walls, floor and lab benches were cut into small pieces and sealed in fiberboard drums" by workers wearing "full protective clothing, including respirators." More than 600 cubic feet of material was disposed of as "radioactive waste."

Later surveys found more contamination; "in a total of 12 rooms throughout all floors of the building and in hallways," according to a 1983 report. Another report said the building had 40 areas of contamination.

The university covered the contamination by various means, including with tiles. The result "reduced the dose rate to below detection limits," said the 1983 university report, adding that officials believed occupants hadn't been harmed by prior exposures. A 1991 report added: "It is not feasible to remove all the contamination unless all equipment and furnishings are removed and the building gutted."

"They did a good job of sealing this stuff in," says Ms. Mac Kenzie, the radiation safety officer. If there ever was a serious radiation problem at Gilman, the period of "real hazard" would have been between World War II and about 1980, she says.

Still, issues arise. While putting a new roof on Gilman this year, officials discovered some contamination in a third-floor study room. They temporarily evicted three nuclear-chemistry grad students and closed off part of the room before reopening the rest. Though the potential doses were small, says Ms. Mac Kenzie, "you just don't expose people unnecessarily."

## **Fears surface over Lake Huron nuke dump proposal**

Keith Matheny, Detroit Free Press

October 27, 2013

[LINK](#)

KINCARDINE, Ontario -- Canadian utility giant Ontario Power Generation says the layers of rock where it proposes a deep underground nuclear waste storage facility are solid, stable and well-suited for the job. But what's at the surface and less than a mile away -- the shores of Lake Huron -- has people on the Michigan and Canadian sides of the Great Lake fiercely opposed to the plan.

"I'm up in arms," said Michigan resident Sherry Hummel of Williamsburg. "It's just a dangerous, dangerous thing to do near 20% of the world's" unfrozen surface freshwater.

For the 24 million U.S. residents who get drinking water from the Great Lakes, and those making their living from Michigan's \$2.4 billion fishing industry and \$13 billion tourism industry, it's a vital policy decision over which their elected representatives have no control.

This week, a three-person Joint Review Panel appointed by the Canadian government will conclude a public comment period on the utility's plan for a deep geologic repository near its Bruce nuclear facility near Kincardine, a shoreline community of about 11,000 residents about 115 miles northeast of Port Huron. The panel will issue a recommendation in coming weeks to Canada's Cabinet, which will in turn approve, reject or require modifications of the utility's plan.

The facility would be more than 2,200 feet underground in a layer of limestone, with a 660-foot layer of shale above. There, containers of radioactive waste from Ontario's 20 nuclear reactors would be stored in created corridors. Most of the disposed items would be low-level waste, such as mops, rags, floor sweepings and clothing -- items that can be safely handled by workers without any special radiation protection, according to the utility's proposal. But the underground facility also would take intermediate-level waste, "things like filters, resins, things that are closer to the nuclear core," said utility spokesman Neal Kelly.

"They are much more radioactive and need to be handled with a lot more care," he said.

Ironically, among those most supportive of the repository are those who would live closest to it -- Kincardine residents. The radioactive waste is currently stored aboveground in warehouses adjacent to the Bruce nuclear site, and Kincardine Mayor Larry Kraemer said city officials approached the utility more than a decade ago about finding a more permanent solution. A hosting agreement for the repository between Ontario Power Generation and Kincardine was signed in October 2004. Kraemer said he won election in 2006 and re-election in 2010 on the promise to get the repository done.

In an area where most people either work on a farm or at the nuclear plant, the repository means needed jobs, Kraemer said -- up to 500 jobs during construction; then up to 40 permanent jobs to operate.

"These people know nuclear; they know the safety of it, and they choose to live here," he said.

Not all agree. Beverly Fernandez lives in Saugeen Shores, Ontario, about 20 miles from Kincardine. She helped form the nonprofit organization Stop the Great Lakes Nuclear Dump after learning the project was years into development before she'd ever heard about it, despite living next door. The group has gathered more than 38,000 online petition signatures from both sides of the border calling for rejection of the project.

"Ontario Power Generation did not consider any other sites for the location of this nuclear waste dump," Fernandez said. "A few thousand people in the small town of Kincardine are making this decision on behalf of 40 million people" living around the Great Lakes.

The proposal also caught some Michigan lawmakers off guard. Democratic state Sen. Hoon-Yung Hopgood said public awareness of what the utility proposes drops off dramatically outside the host communities around the Bruce nuclear plant.

"I'm really disappointed in the outreach process, particularly in Michigan," he said.

Kelly said outreach to Michigan began in early 2005, with information provided to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality even before the utility sought a license for the facility in Canada in December that year. Records with the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency show notices of opportunities for public comment on the project dating to 2008. While Ontario Power Generation officials briefed Michigan lawmakers and agency officials on occasion in subsequent years, no public forums or comment opportunities were offered on the deep geologic repository proposal in Michigan, according to outreach records provided by the utility.

Hopgood and Democratic state Rep. Sarah Roberts testified earlier this month at the Joint Review Panel hearings. Hopgood's testimony included letters of concern from a host of Michigan commercial, sportsmen and environmental groups, including the Michigan United Conservation Clubs and the Michigan Boating Industries Association.

"All of the attributes of the Great Lakes -- the drinking water for tens of millions of people, our lives and livelihoods literally depend on it," Hopgood said. "It's a unique natural resource on the globe. Michigan is literally defined by it. The thought of burying nuclear waste next to a Great Lake seems beyond comprehension almost."

Worries below, above

A room is filled with long wooden boxes, each including long, cylindrical rocks of varying colors and textures. It's where the Canadian utility keeps the core rock samples of its test digs in developing the repository. Some of the rock brought up for study from thousands of feet below the surface is more than a billion years old.

"The key thing about these sediments is they are thick, old and stable," said Mark Jensen, a geologist contracted to evaluate the suitability of the site.

The downward shafts pass through a groundwater layer at about 550 feet, but waste would be stored more than 1,500 feet farther down, beneath layers of shale and limestone.

"These are about the best protective barriers you can get," Jensen said.

The facility is being designed to last "a million years," he said, including accounting for the possibility of future ice ages and the return of glaciers to the region, as well as a potential earthquake of up to magnitude 7.5, though no earthquakes greater than 5.0 have been registered in the area over the past 180 years.

The repository would likely be filled within 35 years, at which time the utility would seek decommissioning, a regulated shutdown process. It would then be capped with concrete and clay and essentially left, with no further maintenance needed, according to Jensen.

An East Lansing resident uniquely qualified on the subject of disposing of nuclear waste is less concerned about the repository's proximity to Lake Huron than the rock in which it is being built.

"You have to really be concerned about the nature of the geology in which the wastes are being stored," said John Cantlon, a former vice president of research and dean of the Graduate School at Michigan State University, who served on the U.S. Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board for nearly eight years under Presidents Ronald Reagan, George Bush and Bill Clinton, including four years as the board's chairman.

Though he has not reviewed the scientific specifics of the Canadian utility's project, when told the facility would be built in a layer of limestone, Cantlon said, "I would be a lot happier if it were granite," a denser rock through which water is less likely to flow.

But Cantlon said an even bigger worry for those concerned about the Great Lakes should be continued storage of high-level radioactive spent nuclear fuel at operating and decommissioned nuclear plants throughout the region. Fifteen sites in five U.S. states and Ontario store spent nuclear fuel in wet pools or dry casks within 1 mile of a Great Lake, including four locations in Michigan.

"That's far, far more dangerous and susceptible to terrorist activity," Cantlon said.

Senators urge action

With the Joint Review Panel wrapping up its work, Michigan residents hoping to weigh in on the repository are nearly out of options. Hopgood suggested contacting members of Congress.

Michigan's U.S. Senators, Democrats Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow, last week sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, urging his involvement in helping the Canadian government reconsider the location of the repository and asking that Kerry engage the International Joint Commission, a binational organization that guides the U.S. and Canada in resolution of boundary water issues.

If approved by the Canadian government, construction of the repository would take five to seven years, said Kelly, the utility spokesman.

Meanwhile, Stop the Great Lakes Nuclear Dump is continuing an effort to make residents and local governments aware, attacking the proposal one resolution at a time, Fernandez said.

"To dig a hole and put this waste in here and hope it will stay safe is virtually impossible to prove," Fernandez said. "You will never know if there's been a toxic leak until it's too late."

### **Curtain to Open on Budget Conference--Then Close**

Billy House, National Journal

October 29, 2013

[LINK](#)

The curtain will rise Wednesday on the long-awaited House and Senate budget conference, with 29 lawmakers set to hold their inaugural meeting--complete with opening statements--in full view of the cameras.

But after this opening performance, expect the curtain to be lowered again.

In fact, little in the way of actual negotiating is expected to be carried out in the public spotlight. Instead, the conference committee is ultimately expected to join the super committee and a long list of commissions and other groups that have tried to cut deals behind closed doors. And that prospect is already upsetting some.

"A budget is a moral document, and it is important that any negotiations happen in the light of day," said Alex Lawson, executive director of the advocacy group Social Security Works. "Members of Congress are sent to D.C. to represent the will of the people, not to negotiate secret deals."

Open or closed, the committee faces a difficult task, with a mid-December deadline and partisan tensions peaked. Lawmakers are tasked with finding compromise between two widely divergent spending plans for fiscal 2014 passed by the House and Senate. Any reconciliation would have to be approved by both chambers.

Already, expectations are low among both Republicans and Democrats, and the prospect of a "grand bargain" on 10-year deficit-reduction goals has been largely dismissed. Moreover, no budget conference has reached an agreement in a divided Congress since 1986, when Mike Tyson was heavyweight champion and Magnum P.I. was on television.

Officially, the conference committee has a responsibility to come up with recommendations to the full House and Senate by Dec. 13. The government is being funded now under the temporary spending bill approved earlier this month to end the shutdown. That expires on Jan. 15, and some new funding mechanism will be needed.

As of Tuesday, no decisions had been made about the committee's public schedule beyond Wednesday, according to spokesmen for both House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan, R-Wis., and Senate Budget Committee Chairwoman Patty Murray, D-Wash. Much of Wednesday's opening session, which starts at 10 a.m., is anticipated to be eaten up by prewritten statements from the conferees regarding what they hope or think can be accomplished.

"Obviously we'll have a hearing, and people will lay out their positions, and then we'll try look for areas of compromise ... and obviously there will have to be conversations taking place," said Rep. Chris Van Hollen of Maryland, a conferee and the top Democrat on the House Budget Committee.

Indeed, some argue that the conference has a better chance working outside the public glare.

"It sounds a bit undemocratic, but moving negotiations behind closed doors probably improves the chances that budget conference negotiators will be able to reach an agreement," said Sarah Binder, an expert on Congress at the Brookings Institution.

"On any tough policy issue, legislative deal-making almost requires secrecy. That's the only way to get lawmakers to commit to potentially controversial elements of a broader deal," Binder said.

Rep. Frank Lucas, R-Okla., who will chair the separate House and Senate conference also starting Wednesday on the farm-bill reauthorization, said those negotiations will follow a similar format. There will be the first session in which conferees make opening statements, and then "we'll get to work" in sessions that may not be so public.

"After the photo op and opening statements, it is a good thing in my mind that the private conversations proceed between the two chairpersons," said William Hoagland, a senior vice president at the Bipartisan Policy Center, of the budget conference. The former Senate Budget Committee staff director and GOP aide added, "It is in those private discussions ... where the work will get done if there is to be an agreement."

Steve Pruitt, a former House Budget Committee Democratic staff director who is now a managing partner at Watts Partners, offered, "It's probably best that they go behind closed doors, at least at the beginning, so they can see if they can develop the needed chemistry to reach an agreement versus playing this exercise out in public--where they are duty-bound to stick to their respective legislative body and partisan scripts."

But legislative bodies across the country, from city councils to county boards, manage to pass budgets in full public view, and some say Congress should, too.

"We don't want this to turn into a show trial, where everybody showboats and plays to the cameras," said Steve Ellis, vice president of Taxpayers for Common Sense. "But the work of this committee does need to be public to a great extent."

## **Reid outlines busy November agenda in Senate, including National Defense Authorization Act**

Michael A. Memoli, Los Angeles Times  
October 28, 2013  
[LINK](#)

WASHINGTON - The Senate will consider legislation on gay rights, jobs and defense policy by Thanksgiving, Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) announced Monday while telling the Republican-led House to dispense with "political show votes and start legislating."

Reid outlined the ambitious agenda for the month ahead - which also includes a possibly renewed showdown over pending executive branch nominations - as he opened the first Senate session since lawmakers approved the compromise deal to reopen the government and raise the debt ceiling on Oct. 16.

At the top of the list is the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, known as ENDA, which would prohibit discrimination in the workplace based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Under current federal law, employers cannot discriminate on the basis of race, religion, gender, national origin, age or disability. According to advocates of the bill, 21 states and the District of Columbia extend the prohibition to include sexual orientation, while 16 states and the District of Columbia include gender identity.

The bill was approved by a Senate committee in July, with three Republicans joining Democrats to advance the measure. The bill would need the support of at least five Republicans to overcome a potential filibuster, if all Democrats and independents support it.

Reid said the Senate would also consider the National Defense Authorization Act, which sets spending levels and policies for defense and national security programs. The bill advanced by the Senate Armed Services Committee and a House-passed measure include new policies meant to combat sexual assault in the military. The Senate version also restores funding for programs that were subject to the across-the-board cuts dictated by the so-called sequester.

Months after a last-minute agreement to approve stalled Cabinet nominations prevented a threatened Democratic attempt to change the Senate filibuster rules, Reid said he would again seek to hold confirmation votes on a number of other pending administration choices, including Rep. Melvin Watt (D-N.C.) to be the top regulator for Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Republicans have resisted the nomination, arguing President Obama's choice is not qualified to lead the complex Federal Housing Finance Agency. Republicans have supported acting director Edward J. DeMarco, who has blocked several efforts by the administration to use the agency's authority more aggressively in combating foreclosures.

"Obstruction has reared its ugly head" again, Reid said. "In the wake of a Republican government shutdown, the nation is watching for a sign the Senate can function efficiently and normally."

The White House joined Reid in urging an up-or-down vote on Watt's nomination. Senior administration officials met with house and financial industry leaders Monday to make clear that Watt's confirmation was "a top White House priority," spokeswoman Amy Brundage said.

One nomination vote scheduled for Monday night was postponed because not all senators had returned to Washington. Reid warned his colleagues that they should expect such votes routinely in the next month and that absences would not be tolerated.

"If we're going to finish our work in this four-week period we'll have to work," Reid said, adding that it would allow lawmakers to avoid working during the traditional Thanksgiving and Christmas recesses. "We'll work on Mondays and Fridays" - when the Senate often does not hold full workdays - and "I hope we don't have to do weekends but we've got to get this work done."

Though the Senate was only now returning to work, Reid took note of the limited schedule of the Republican-led House for the remainder of the year: just 18 days scheduled. The House met last week for two days while the Senate remained on recess, approving a major water projects bill. It will have two full working days this week, with two House committees continuing their investigations of the problematic rollout of the Affordable Care Act.

House and Senate budget negotiators will meet Wednesday for their first full working session. But the House will then recess until after Veterans Day.

Reid said that House Speaker John A. Boehner's insistence on adhering to the so-called Hastert Rule, by only bringing bills to a vote if they have the support of most Republican members, has stalled progress on immigration reform, the farm bill and jobs legislation. It also was at the root of a shutdown he again said was caused by "tea party extremists."

"Moderate Republicans have been complicit in allowing this disturbing trend to continue," Reid said. "As a conference committee sits down to negotiate a long-term budget agreement ... moderate Republicans must not absent themselves."

Rory Cooper, a spokesman for House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-Va.), responded that the Senate "spent last week and this week doing absolutely nothing on the floor," while the House "is considering and passing bipartisan bills to create jobs, build infrastructure and reduce regulation."

"Sen. Reid should really get focused on the countless job-creating bills he has stalled in the do-nothing Senate," he said.

## **CNN to air nuclear power documentary, PANDORA'S PROMISE, Thursday, Nov. 7**

CNN

Air Date: November 7, 2013

[LINK](#)

PANDORA'S PROMISE, premiere at the Sundance Film Festival in January, will receive its global television debut as a CNN Films broadcast on Thursday, Nov. 7 at 9:00pm with an encore at 12:00am. All times Eastern.

The atomic bomb and accidents at Chernobyl, Three Mile Island, and Fukushima bring to mind apocalyptic disasters, but the science and experience since suggest that long-held fears about nuclear power may be wrong. Academy Award®-nominated director Robert Stone examines how fears of "nukes" may have extended the era of fossil fuels, perilously accelerating the pace of climate change as the global demand for energy soars, particularly in the developing world. Stone takes his camera inside the exclusion zone around Fukushima, and even ventures inside the notorious Chernobyl nuclear power plant.

Stone tells the intensely personal stories of environmentalists and energy experts who have undergone profound conversions from being passionately against, to strongly favoring nuclear energy - putting their careers and reputations on the line in the process. Through the voices of Stewart Brand, Gwyneth Cravens, Mark Lynas, Richard Rhodes, and Michael Shellenberger, Stone exposes this rift within the environmental movement as they describe their individual journeys of defection. Also included are interviews with two pioneering engineers of next generation nuclear reactors.

When PANDORA'S PROMISE and BLACKFISH were announced as part of the 2013 fall slate of the network's documentary presentations, Jeff Zucker, president of CNN Worldwide, said, "Both of these special films represent exactly the type of engaging, thought-provoking content that is

the mission of CNN Films." "Through our acquisitions and commissions of exceptional factual content, we aim to encourage dialogue on the issues raised in the films with our filmmakers, experts, and other stakeholders via our robust television, digital and social platforms," he said.

"I made this film in order to illuminate what I see as the 'elephant in the room' when it comes to the ongoing debate about how to tackle climate change," Robert Stone said. "We have a moral imperative to lift billions of people out of poverty, while at the same time dramatically reducing CO2 emissions. How to do that is the central issue of our time and that led me to take a second look at nuclear energy," Stone said.