

MAPLight.org SPOTLIGHT:

Is H.R. 5632 Lost in Committee? -- This Bill Would Prohibit the Importation of Radioactive Waste into the United States From Italy



WHAT GOES ON BEHIND THE CLOSED DOORS OF CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES?

MAPLight.org's Newest Web 2.0 Transparency Tool Reveals the River of Money That Flows Through All Bills in Committee

BERKELEY, CA, July 17—Congressional Committees play a primary role in our political process--developing legislation and performing oversight--however, their work remains largely in the dark. These key legislative bodies have proven to be an effective target for big money interests. MAPLight.org's Committees Tool provides a much needed window into the inner workings of Congressional Committees, revealing campaign contributions received by each Committee member from interest groups lobbying on bills before any Congressional Committee. This new transparency tool empowers journalists and citizen activists with hard data to hold their legislators accountable when big money interests seek to use campaign contributions to gain access and influence legislation while it's in Committee.

"This new level of government transparency hones in on the role big money interests play in our political process," said Sean Tanner, MAPLight.org's research director. "Committee hearings provide an opportunity for people to be heard. However, who's more likely to get the ear of Committee members, a corporation, which gives millions of dollars in campaign contributions to Committee members, or a concerned citizen in Utah worried about more radioactive waste being stored in his or her state, for instance?"

How the Committees Tool works:

H.R. 5632 would amend the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 and prohibit the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) from issuing a license authorizing the importation into the United State of: (1) low-level radioactive waste; or (2) specific radioactive waste streams.

Energy Solution is a nuclear waste management company seeking a license from the NRC to import 20,000 tons (a total volume of up to approximately 1 million cubic feet) of radioactive waste from Italy, www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/fact-sheets/energysolutions.html. According to the NRC application, Energy Solutions would process the contaminated material at its facilities in Tennessee and Utah.

H.R. 5632 would effectively block Energy Solutions from importing Italy's radioactive nuclear waste into the US. However, the bill is currently in The House Committee on Energy and Commerce and the House Committee on Ways and Means, and neither Committee has moved the bill forward since it was introduced on March 13, 2008.

Below is a snapshot of the special interest group money given to members of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. John Dingell (D-MI), **Committee Chair, has received \$45,250 from the nuclear plant construction, equipment & services industry,** which is trying to block passage of the bill. Environmental policy groups, which support this bill, have given significantly less. *(Contribution data provided by the Center for Responsive Politics, www.opensecrets.org.)*

Supporters & Opponents	Votes	Timeline of Contributions	Committees	History & Status	In the News
This bill was referred to these committees:					
House Committee on Energy and Commerce House Committee on Ways and Means					
House Committee on Energy and Commerce					
Contributions received from interests who:					<i>Showing contributions</i>
<small>Jan 2001-May 2008 Senate / Jan 2005-May 2008 House</small>					
Legislator ▲	Party	State	Did want this law	Did not want this law	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental policy • Nuclear plant construction, equipment & svcs 					
Dingell (Chair)	D	(MI-15)	\$3,760	\$45,250	(details...)
Barton (Ranking Member)	R	(TX-6)		\$6,500	(details...)
Allen	D	(ME-1)	\$14,610		(details...)
Baldwin	D	(WI-2)	\$4,030		(details...)
Barrow	D	(GA-12)	\$27,910		(details...)
Blackburn	R	(TN-7)		\$1,000	(details...)
Blunt	R	(MO-7)			(details...)
Bono Mack	R	(CA-45)			(details...)
Boucher	D	(VA-9)	\$10	\$3,000	(details...)

For a full list of contributions and news articles on H.R. 5632 visit: <http://www.maplight.org/map/us/bill/75339/default/committees/373>.

For bill text on HR 5632, visit <http://www.opencongress.org/bill/110-h5632/text>.

MAPLight.org reveals how contributions correlate with legislation so that citizens have key information needed to draw their own conclusions about how campaign contributions affect policy. Campaign contributions are only one factor affecting legislator behavior. The correlations we highlight between industry and union giving and legislative outcomes do not show that one caused the other, and we do not make this claim. We do make the claim, however, that campaign contributions bias our legislative system. Simply put, candidates who take positions contrary to industry interests are unlikely to receive industry funds and thus have fewer resources for their election campaigns than those whose votes favor industry interests.

About MAPLight.org:

MAPLight.org is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Berkeley, California. Its search engine at MAPLight.org illuminates the connection between Money And Politics (MAP) via an unprecedented database of campaign contributions and legislative outcomes. Data sources include: GovTrack.us; Center for Responsive Politics (OpenSecrets.org); Federal Election Commission (FEC); and National Institute on Money in State Politics (NIMSP). Support and opposition data is obtained through testimony at public hearings, proprietary news databases and public statements on the websites of trade associations and other groups. To learn more visit MAPLight.org.

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