



INSTITUTE FOR ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH

6935 Laurel Avenue, Suite 201
Takoma Park, MD 20912

Phone: (301) 270-5500
FAX: (301) 270-3029
e-mail: ieer@ieer.org
<http://www.ieer.org>

**Statement of Bobbie Paul, Executive Director of Atlanta Chapter
Women's Action for New Directions Board member of Georgia Center for
Law in the Public Interest on *Nuclear Dumps by the Riverside***

National Press Club

11 March 2004

Good morning. My name is Bobbie Paul. I'm a resident of Atlanta, Georgia (23 years) and I serve as Executive Director of Atlanta WAND (Women's Action for New Directions). WAND is a national women's organization based in Boston, with fourteen chapters across the country and a great legislative team of four in DC. I've come to support Dr. Makhijani and add a few words of my own.

As a wife, mother, taxpayer, and Georgian, I am concerned about the amount of money this country pours into nuclear weapons development. (The President's proposed 2005 budget shows \$19 billion for the nuclear industry that includes \$6.6 billion for nuclear weapons.) But I am also concerned about the amount of money we are not spending to properly deal with the radioactive pollution described by Dr. Makhijani – the result of 60 years of bomb making activities at SRS.

Tritium, a radioactive isotope of hydrogen, is the most common water pollutant at SRS. IEER's report points out that existing standards may not be protecting pregnant women and their babies from the health effects of tritium, which include cancer and birth defects. The tritium problem is likely to get worse if the government doesn't clean up the buried waste at SRS and revise tritium standards to keep up with science.

While the DOE doggedly pursues new weapons programs that will add to the contamination at SRS, it is turning its back on clean up. A critical issue that WAND has been following since December is the cancellation – by DOE – of Georgia's vigorous and comprehensive monitoring program that our Environmental Protection Division has been carrying out since 2001 – i.e. for three years. This program monitors for radioactive materials near SRS since SRS releases a

variety of radioactive materials to the environment. (Indicate map) Georgia's EPD monitors surface water weekly; air samples every two weeks, tritium in air every two weeks; milk monthly; rain monthly; direct radiation measurements quarterly; vegetation quarterly; fish twice per year; river sediment twice per year; seafood in the Savannah area twice per year; groundwater annually; soil annually, crops annually and deer annually.

DOE calls the Georgia monitoring program "redundant" because South Carolina has one. Without funding, which I just heard will run out Monday, March 15th, Georgia's monitoring program will be suspended. If the government can afford \$4 billion for a new plutonium bomb plant, DOE surely can afford to continue Georgia's radiation monitoring program which cost taxpayers only \$1,890,000 for three years.

At WAND we talk a lot about real security. Security – to us – is the sense of well being that comes from having our most basic needs met: food, shelter, education, health care, a job, clean water and clean air.

And we also talk a lot about pies...money pies. How pie slices for real security – like protecting women and children from radioactive poisons – are getting slimmer and slimmer while the slices for DOE weapons programs are getting fatter and fatter.

I am, indeed, privileged to be able to stand here and say that I feel our national budget priorities are out of whack considering the values that most men and women cherish. Too much on weapons and not enough on human and environmental needs.

I'm grateful for the dedicated work of Dr. Makhijani and his colleagues and the publications of their findings, as well as your presence here today. I'm truly hopeful that this palpable wave of citizen activism and a keen bipartisan interest by Georgia state legislators can reverse the DOE decision to end radiation monitoring. Ultimately I hope that we can stop this administration's pursuit for developing new nuclear weapons that will lead to more waste, more contamination.

It is unconscionable that this administration is pursuing unneeded, provocative nuclear weapons programs at SRS even before it has cleaned up the mess it created during the Cold War. Worse, the DOE is taking actions that are turning the site into a huge, essentially permanent, radioactive waste dump. DOE should clean up its act before it even thinks about new bomb plants that would add to the burdens it has already created.