

decades' long stalemate over what to do with used fuel from our nuclear reactors. Senator FEINSTEIN and I have been working on solving the nuclear waste stalemate for years, and I'd like to take the opportunity to compliment Senator Feinstein on her leadership and her insistence that we find a solution to this problem. The only way to break the stalemate is to get a final decision on whether Yucca Mountain is safe or not.

And this year's budget request for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission includes \$38.5 million to begin to answer that questions by restarting the licensing process for the Yucca Mountain repository. This is the next step the Department of Energy must follow to determine whether it can begin construction of Yucca Mountain. After a public hearing where all parties, including the State of Nevada, can provide expert testimony and evidence, the Commission will make a final determination whether it is safe to build Yucca Mountain.

I strongly believe that Yucca Mountain can and should be part of the solution to the nuclear waste stalemate. Federal law designates Yucca Mountain as the nation's repository for used nuclear fuel, and the Commission's own scientists have told us that we can safely store nuclear waste there for up to one million years.

But even if we had Yucca Mountain open today, we would still need to look for another permanent repository. We already have more than enough used fuel to fill Yucca Mountain to its legal capacity.

The quickest, and probably the least expensive, way for the federal government to start to meet its used nuclear fuel obligations is for the Department of Energy to contract with a private storage facility for used nuclear fuel.

I understand that two private companies have submitted license applications to the NRC for private consolidated storage facilities, one in Texas and one in New Mexico, and that the NRC's review is well underway. I'll be asking some questions about that today. I want to make sure that the Commission has all the resources it needs in fiscal year 2020 to review the applications for consolidated storage facilities because we have to start working together to solve the nuclear waste stalemate if we want a strong nuclear industry.

Senator MURKOWSKI, along with Senator FEINSTEIN and I, introduced a bill this week to implement the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future, which include using temporary private storage facilities. The legislation complements Yucca Mountain, and would create a new federal agency to find additional permanent repositories and temporary facilities for used nuclear fuel.

Instead of building more windmills, which only produce 20 percent of our carbon-free electricity, or solar farms, which only produce 4 percent of our carbon-free electricity, the best way to make sure the United States has a reliable source of inexpensive, efficient, carbon-free electricity is to extend the licenses of our existing nuclear plants—which produce 60 percent of our carbon-free electricity—if it is safe to do so.

Most of our 98 reactors have already extended their operating licenses from 40 to 60 years (although many have decided to close prematurely for economic reasons), and some utilities are beginning the process to extend their licenses from 60 to 80 years.

The Commission has spent the past several years developing the framework to review these types of license renewal applications to make sure the reactors can continue to operate safely from 60 to 80 years.

This year's budget request includes funding to review what the Commission calls

"subsequent" license renewal applications for six reactors in Florida, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. Just those 6 reactor extensions would equal about what solar power currently produces and a fourth of what wind power currently produces. That is just accounting for the 6 reactors that have applied to extend their licenses rather than shut down. If even half of the remaining 92 reactors decide to extend their licenses another 20 years, it would produce almost double the amount of wind power that is currently produced and as much as 10 times the amount of solar power produced.

So if you care about carbon free emissions, the short term solution for the next 20 years is, where safely, to extend the licenses for these reactors. I want to make sure that the Commission has the resources it needs to review those applications in fiscal year 2020, because I think it is important to maintain our existing nuclear power when it is safe to do so.

The Commission's budget reduction has been steep over the past five fiscal years. As part of its effort to reduce its budget, the Commission has limited hiring, especially entry-level hiring. We have heard from the Commission that of its 2,900 current employees, 24 percent are currently eligible for retirement. Four years from now, 42 percent will be eligible for retirement. Those numbers are not a concern as long as the NRC has younger staff ready to take over the important work of the agency. But I understand that only 2 percent of NRC employees are under 30 years old. To have nuclear power in the future, we need to have a nuclear regulator. I would like to understand how the Commission is ensuring that the next generation is in place.

I look forward to working with the Commission as we begin putting together our Energy and Water Appropriations bill for fiscal year 2020, and also with Senator FEINSTEIN, who I will now recognize for her opening statement.

104TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Mr. REED. Mr. President, on Sunday, I had the opportunity to attend the 104th anniversary commemoration of the Armenian genocide, hosted at the Armenian Martyrs Memorial in Providence, RI. I was pleased to be able to join with so many in the Armenian community in my home State for this solemn event.

Over a century ago, one of the greatest tragedies of the 20th century began when the Young Turk leaders of the Ottoman Empire executed more than 200 prominent Armenians. What followed was an 8-year campaign of oppression and massacre. By 1923, an estimated 1 and a half million Armenians were killed and over a half a million survivors were exiled. These atrocities affected the lives of every Armenian living in Asia Minor and throughout the world.

The U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire during this dark time, Henry Morgenthau, Sr., unsuccessfully pleaded with President Wilson to take action, and later remembered the events of the genocide, saying, "I am confident that the whole history of the human race contains no such horrible episode as this. The great massacres and persecutions of the past seem al-

most insignificant when compared to the sufferings of the Armenian race in 1915."

Those who survived the Armenian genocide, however, persevered due to their unbreakable spirit and steadfast resolve, going on to greatly contribute to the lands in which they established new homes and communities, including the United States. That is why we not only commemorate this grave tragedy each year, but also take the time to celebrate the traditions, the contributions, and the bright future of the Armenian people. Indeed, my home State of Rhode Island continues to be enriched by our strong and vibrant Armenian-American community.

To honor the memory of this tragedy, I have once again joined with several of my colleagues on a resolution to encourage the U.S. to officially recognize the Armenian genocide. We must find a way to come together to recognize the truth of what happened and support and assist those facing persecution today.

As ranking member on the Senate Armed Services Committee, I also remain committed to supporting assistance to Armenia to strengthen security, promote economic growth, and foster democratic reforms and development.

As we remember the past, we remain committed to forging a brighter future. We must continue to guard against hatred and oppression so that we can prevent such crimes against humanity from happening again.

REMEMBERING LIEUTENANT COLONEL DICK COLE

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I am here on the floor to talk about an American hero.

General Douglas MacArthur once said, "Duty, Honor, Country. Those three hallowed words reverently dictate what you ought to be, what you can be, what you will be." Those words—duty, honor, country—are exemplified through the life and legacy of Lieutenant Colonel Richard Cole.

Lt. Col. Cole, who went by Dick, was born and raised in my grandfather's hometown, Dayton, OH. He graduated from Steele High School and completed 2 years of college at Ohio University before enlisting in the Aviation Cadet Program of the U.S. Army Air Corps in November 1940. He commissioned as a second lieutenant in July 1941 and received his pilot wings at Randolph Field in Texas. From there, he joined the ranks of the 34th Bombardment Squadron of the 17th Bombardment Group.

Soon after, Lt. Col. Cole became one of the 80 volunteers who signed up for the Doolittle Mission, which was to become the first offensive strike on mainland Japan during World War II. In a turn of fate, a Japanese vessel spotted the USS *Hornet*, forcing the mission to commence a day early. Therefore, what was originally planned