

Public Law 96-573  
96th Congress

An Act

To set forth a Federal policy for the disposal of low-level radioactive wastes, and for other purposes.

Dec. 22, 1980  
[S. 2189]

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

Low-Level  
Radioactive  
Waste Policy  
Act.

SHORT TITLE

SECTION 1. This Act may be cited as the "Low-Level Radioactive Waste Policy Act".

42 USC 2021b  
note.

DEFINITIONS

SEC. 2. As used in this Act—

42 USC 2021b.

(1) The term "disposal" means the isolation of low-level radioactive waste pursuant to requirements established by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission under applicable laws.

(2) The term "low-level radioactive waste" means radioactive waste not classified as high-level radioactive waste, transuranic waste, spent nuclear fuel, or byproduct material as defined in section 11 e. (2) of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954.

(3) The term "State" means any State of the United States, the District of Columbia, and, subject to the provisions of Public Law 96-205, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, and any other territory or possession of the United States.

(4) For purposes of this Act the term "atomic energy defense activities of the Secretary" includes those activities and facilities of the Department of Energy carrying out the function of—

- (i) Naval reactors development and propulsion,
- (ii) weapons activities, verification and control technology,
- (iii) defense materials production,
- (iv) inertial confinement fusion,
- (v) defense waste management, and
- (vi) defense nuclear materials security and safeguards (all as included in the Department of Energy appropriations account in any fiscal year for atomic energy defense activities).

GENERAL PROVISIONS

SEC. 3. (a) Compacts established under this Act or actions taken under such compacts shall not be applicable to the transportation, management, or disposal of low-level radioactive waste from atomic energy defense activities of the Secretary or Federal research and development activities.

42 USC 2021c.

(b) Any facility established or operated exclusively for the disposal of low-level radioactive waste produced by atomic energy defense activities of the Secretary or Federal research and development

activities shall not be subject to compacts established under this Act or actions taken under such compacts.

LOW-LEVEL RADIOACTIVE WASTE DISPOSAL

State compacts regarding regional facilities. 42 USC 2021d.

SEC. 4. (a)(1) It is the policy of the Federal Government that— (A) each State is responsible for providing for the availability of capacity either within or outside the State for the disposal of low-level radioactive waste generated within its borders except for waste generated as a result of defense activities of the Secretary or Federal research and development activities; and (B) low-level radioactive waste can be most safely and efficiently managed on a regional basis.

Congressional consent.

(2)(A) To carry out the policy set forth in paragraph (1), the States may enter into such compacts as may be necessary to provide for the establishment and operation of regional disposal facilities for low-level radioactive waste.

(B) A compact entered into under subparagraph (A) shall not take effect until the Congress has by law consented to the compact. Each such compact shall provide that every 5 years after the compact has taken effect the Congress may by law withdraw its consent. After January 1, 1986, any such compact may restrict the use of the regional disposal facilities under the compact to the disposal of low-level radioactive waste generated within the region.

Report to Congress and States.

(b)(1) In order to assist the States in carrying out the policy set forth in subsection (a)(1), the Secretary shall prepare and submit to Congress and to each of the States within 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act a report which—

(A) defines the disposal capacity needed for present and future low-level radioactive waste on a regional basis;

(B) defines the status of all commercial low-level radioactive waste disposal sites and includes an evaluation of the license status of each such site, the state of operation of each site, including operating history, an analysis of the adequacy of disposal technology employed at each site to contain low-level radioactive wastes for their hazardous lifetimes, and such recommendations as the Secretary considers appropriate to assure protection of the public health and safety from wastes transported to such sites;

(C) evaluates the transportation requirements on a regional basis and in comparison with performance of present transportation practices for the shipment of low-level radioactive wastes, including an inventory of types and quantities of low-level wastes, and evaluation of shipment requirements for each type of waste and an evaluation of the ability of generators, shippers, and carriers to meet such requirements; and

(D) evaluates the capability of the low-level radioactive waste disposal facilities owned and operated by the Department of Energy to provide interim storage for commercially generated low-level waste and estimates the costs associated with such interim storage.

(2) In carrying out this subsection, the Secretary shall consult with the Governors of the States, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Environmental Protection Agency, the United States Geological Survey, and the Secretary of Transportation, and such other agencies and departments as he finds appropriate.

Approved December 22, 1980.

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**LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:**

**SENATE REPORT** No. 96-548 (Comm. on Energy and Natural Resources).  
**CONGRESSIONAL RECORD**, Vol. 126 (1980):

July 28-30, considered and passed Senate.

Dec. 3, H.R. 8378 considered and passed House; passage vacated and S. 2189, amended, passed in lieu.

Dec. 13, Senate agreed to House amendment with amendments; House agreed to Senate amendments.