Radioactive Waste Worries County Towns

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district—Barkhamsted, Colebrook and New Hartford—to adopt similar resolutions.

"I think it's a very serious problem," said Barkhamsted First Selectman Carmella Lattizori. "We're in the process of trying to figure out what to do with our landfill, which is polluting the area. Now, we're talking about radioactive waste (in landfills), and the Federal Government says it's not at the level it's going to hurt anybody.

"But it's difficult to be comforted about that kind of thing, because they've been wrong before," she said.

Meanwhile, the Salisbury-based Northwest Corner Coalition on Nuclear Disarmament is considering efforts to make Litchfield County Connecticut's first nuclear-free zone, according to coalition member Amy Lake.

"The goal eventually is for all of Litchfield County to be declared nuclear-free," she said. "We're planning things town by town. As we get closer to the announcement of the three target towns, I see a lot more people getting concerned about this.

"People need to educate themselves," Ms. Lake said. "There's so much we don't know." The nuclear industry is "such a secretive industry. We are lulled by having this cheap energy and the promises that the industry has put out a strong statement."

Charlene LaVoie, the town's community lawyer, said that whether or not the resolution holds any legal weight, "We need to send a message to government and industry that people are thinking about this issue. We're not just letting it go unnoticed."

"It's more of a political gesture, a statement of sentiment," said John Greenberg, treasurer and trustee for the New England Coalition Against Nuclear Pollution, based in Brattleboro, Vt. "As a declarative statement, these are valid and worthwhile ways of sending strong messages to those with the power to change things. Legally, though, they're of little consequence."

The New England Coalition Against Nuclear Pollution and People's Action for Clean Energy in Connecticut are two of 29 organizations across the country, in addition to the State of Maine, that have joined a lawsuit filed by the Washington, D.C.-based Public Citizen against the N.R.C., seeking to overturn its below-regulatory-concern policy on constitutional grounds. Public Citizen is a national, nonprofit research and advocacy organization that concentrates on consumer and environmental issues.

According to a spokesman for Democratic U.S. Senator Joseph I. Lieberman, who has cosponsored Congressional legislation to prohibit the N.R.C. from implementing its radioactive waste deregulation policy, the states of Minnesota, Maine, Vermont, Iowa, Pennsylvania and Iowa have passed laws against such deregulation.

Sue Gagner, a public affairs officer at N.R.C. headquarters in Rockville, Md., said that since the new policy was adopted in July, no generator of low-level radioactive waste has applied to the N.R.C. to be permitted to use anything other than a radioactive waste disposal facility.

She said that the N.R.C. has not taken a position on states enacting their

"I'm sure that if Litchfield County is designated as one of the three hazardous waste or nuclear sites, people are going to be just hysterical."

—Linda Cardini
Executive Director
N.W.C.O.G.