

Letter: Now is time to speak up on West Valley cleanup

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Now is time to speak up on West Valley cleanup

We have an important one-time opportunity to make a difference in the cleanup of the dangerous high- and low-level radioactive waste stored at the West Valley Demonstration Project for over 40 years.

Public comments, due April 23, are being taken on the “scope” of what the Department of Energy will consider doing about it.

The fate of our communities’ health and, for some, our lives, may rest on what action is taken. Some of these materials remain radioactive for thousands of years. Radiation increases risks of cancer, genetic damage and more. For example, Strontium 90 replaces calcium in bones and teeth, causing bone cancer and leukemia. Leakage into Cattaraugus Creek could reach the Great Lakes, also contaminating a drinking water aquifer. Erosion due to rainfall threatens to expose buried wastes from above, while leakage can occur below. As a “leukemia mom” I don’t want to see more people go through what my daughter did.

I urge you to demand a complete, not partial, cleanup of this waste, including digging up the buried portion. Also, please ask for an extension of the comment period, as more time is needed to study the huge amount of technical data, and to further publicize this. Finally, please insist that off-site areas also be evaluated and cleaned up.

Together we can make a difference in the future of our region for generations to come.

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