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Committee Chaired by Maurer Professor to Complete its Analytical Review of Hanford Nuclear Reservation Waste Options

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Recommended Citation

Boyd, James Owsley, "Committee Chaired by Maurer Professor to Complete its Analytical Review of Hanford Nuclear Reservation Waste Options" (2023). *Keep Up With the Latest News from the Law School (blog)*. 60.

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Committee chaired by Maurer professor to complete its analytical review of Hanford Nuclear Reservation waste options

Posted on [May 30, 2023](#) by [joboyd](#)

A committee chaired by an Indiana University Maurer School of Law professor will complete next week its five-year charge to review the analysis performed by a team investigating how best to treat and dispose of low-level waste at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation in Washington.

John S. Applegate, the James L. Calamaras Professor of Law, has served as chair of the 13-member National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) committee since 2018. The



Prof. John Strait Applegate

committee will conclude its work with a public meeting in Richland, Washington, on June 6. Applegate had previously chaired a prior review of the waste disposal issue from 2017-2020.

The committee's formation and work stems from the storage of radioactive and other hazardous wastes at the Hanford site, where approximately two-thirds of the nation's plutonium stockpile for nuclear weapons was produced from 1944 to 1987.

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With roughly 56 million gallons of waste stored in 177 underground tanks, the treatment and disposal of that waste is expected to take up to 50 years at a cost of more than \$50 billion.

To best determine a cleanup plan, the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Environmental Management was required by Congress to produce a framework that would evaluate different treatment options. The DOE contracted with FFRDCs to conduct that analysis with the National Academies committee serving as an independent reviewer of that analysis.

"Our role is to evaluate the quality and completeness of the Federally Funded Research and Development Center report, which will then inform the decision-making process of the U.S. Department of Energy and Congress on how to treat supplemental low-activity waste," Applegate said.

The committee has produced three reports analyzing the FFRDC report, and will conclude its work with a fourth and final report summarizing public comments and whether the committee believes any of those comments merits a change in their findings.

Applegate, a nationally recognized environmental law scholar, has been widely cited for his work in environmental risk assessment and policy analysis.

He is a co-author of a leading books on the subject: *The Regulation of Toxic Substances and Hazardous Wastes*, and *Environmental Law: RCRA, CERCLA, and the Management of Hazardous Waste*.

He has served on previous NASEM committees related to radioactive waste, especially from nuclear weapons production, over the course of his career.

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