

Radioactive waste is her 'hottest' job yet

By Penny Wright
Special writer

BEVERLY McAninch is seldom idle. Over the past 15 years, she has pursued an interest in governmental affairs in Plymouth city government, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), the Southeast Michigan Transportation Authority and a four-year stint as president of the League of Women Voters of Michigan.

The former mayor of Plymouth is devoting her energies (50 hours per week) to her "hottest" assignment yet—resolving the state's radioactive waste disposal dilemma.

"I want this disposal issue handled right. That is why I got involved," said McAninch, who chairs the Michigan Radioactive Waste Control Committee.

The seven-member panel was created by the Michigan Legislature in December 1985. It is comprised of four nuclear waste experts and three members of the general public and is charged with advising Gov. James Blanchard and the Legislature about the disposal of the state's low-level radioactive waste.

"MY GOAL is to open the decision-making process to all the people in Michigan," said McAninch, a mother of four and grandmother to two youngsters.

"My biggest concerns are the political and emotional problems surrounding the siting of a radioactive waste disposal facility. I'm not as concerned about the technical problems. This type of waste has been safely contained in the past," she said.

The disposal issue came to a head in 1980, when the federal government mandated the states to manage their own low-level radioactive waste by 1993. Low-level radioactive wastes are byproducts of nuclear power plants, hospitals, universities, research institutions and industry.

Michigan formed a regional compact with Iowa, Indiana, Missouri, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Ohio to address the problem. On Feb. 27, Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio and Minnesota were named the four finalists in the "host state" site selection process.

"UNLESS ANOTHER state in the Midwest compact volunteers and has



Beverly McAninch
biggest problems emotional

a viable site, the odds are high that Michigan will be selected," McAninch said. She noted that Michigan produces the most low-level radioactive waste in terms of volume and

radioactivity of the compact states.

Two communities in Wisconsin have tentatively volunteered. About 88 percent of Michigan's low-level radioactive waste volume is generated by nuclear power plant operation and maintenance. This waste is comprised of used filters, resins, clothing, tools and reactor components.

Spent fuel rods are not included. McAninch and her committee recently completed a series of public meetings around Michigan to explain the site selection process and solicit volunteer communities to host the waste facility. An incentive package of approximately \$2 million yearly is available for the host community.

TWO UPPER Peninsula communities and six in Lower have requested more information.

"If I were living at a potential site, I would be concerned and would want more information," said McAninch. "There are tough political and economic issues such as property values and the potential loss of re-

creational business that need to be addressed.

She contends the emotional issues are harder to address. "The psychological fear of nuclear waste is as real as the physical safety considerations."

McAninch said most of the objections to locating a low-level radioactive waste facility in Michigan focus on the storage of Class C wastes. These represent about 1 percent of the waste volume of the Midwest compact. Class C wastes have the highest level of radioactivity and decay to safe levels within 500 years.

"The criticism leveled at the Class C waste has been well thought out and responsible," McAninch noted. "Our committee is looking at the is-

ssues carefully and may recommend the federal government handle this type of waste."

A public hearing on Class C radioactive waste will start at 7 p.m. Monday, March 30, in the Law Building auditorium in the Government Complex in Lansing.

PEOPLE WHO lie the siting process to the electric power industry's use of nuclear energy are "barking up the wrong tree," she said. "Our committee can't put nuclear power plants out of business."

The longtime Plymouth resident admits her own thoughts about radioactive waste have changed since her appointment to the RWCC committee a year ago.

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