The Department of Energy is considering drilling three-mile-deep boreholes to test the viability of granite bedrock as a potential disposal method for high-level radioactive waste.

Why's Who Behind Pro Nuclear Legislation? (Continued from Front Cover)

made during the heat of the debate on the recently passed legislation during January, February, and March (those numbers will be reported after June 30).

In $175,000 really all it takes to buy a state law? Probably not. Besides being more politically effective, NEI's new coalition-building strategy also makes its policy investments difficult to track. For example, in 2013 the Center for Public Integrity exposed a $10,000 donation that NEI made to the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), the right-wing group with which many Wisconsin Republican legislators are publicly affiliated. NEI's spokesperson said at the time that the donation (ALEC is a registered "charity") was meant to "increase awareness of energy and environmental considerations among state and local officials.

According to NEI's Jon Breed, the repeal in Wisconsin will help inform the group's efforts to change legislation in other states. The National Conference of State Legislatures lists 15 states as having some kind of restriction on new nuclear power construction; they are California, Colorado, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington. NEI also publicizes industry testimonials to the federal level. In 2015, the 501(c)(6) nonprofit organization (meaning it pays no federal taxes, but member dues are not tax deductible) reported $2,745 million in federal lobbying expenditures, mostly focused on influencing members of the House and Senate as well as the Department of Energy. NEI also contributes money according to the Center for Responsive Politics. NEI's 2015 financial report breaks down its $53.2 million annual budget by project; of the $6 million, $3.9 million was designated for "Lobbying and Building Public and Political Support," account for well over half its expenditures—after operating expenses.

Ordinary citizens have the most to lose from the repeal represented by the Citizens Utility Board of Wisconsin, which opposed the repeal of what it called "Wisconsin’s Nuclear Power Safety Net," a system that would have prevented the state from ever entering new reactor construction. But NEI's membership—those paying the dues that make up its $53 million budget—included everyone from small utility commissioners to ratepayer-organized cooperative utilities. The head of the University of Tennessee's Nuclear Engineering Department on NEI's board of directors next to representatives of corporate nuclear giants like Westinghouse, Exelon, and Holtec, along with trade union leaders. Dairyland Power, a wholesale energy distribution and transmission cooperative serving rural Wisconsin, is an NEI member too—so are the University of Wisconsin, Madison Area Technical College, the Harvard School of Public Health, and more than 100 other publicly and privately funded community colleges, technical schools, and universities. International membership includes the Tokyo Electric Power Company (owners of the destroyed Fukushima reactors that continue to spew radiation into the air and the Pacific Ocean).