



NUCLEAR INFORMATION AND RESOURCE SERVICE

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NUCLEAR DRAGONS TO BE SLAIN!

Nuclear power doesn't have much going for it: it's dangerous, produces lethal radioactive waste, releases radiation routinely into our air and water, requires dirty mining and processing of uranium, and is incredibly expensive.

So the nuclear industry and its backers have seized on the only issue they can: as a relatively low-carbon source of electricity, they say, nuclear power should be used to fight climate change.

Actually, as energy guru Amory Lovins and many others have pointed out, using nuclear power to fight global warming would be counterproductive. New reactors take too long to build—10 years or so—to make a difference in the short term, and spending enormous amounts of money on new reactors would prevent the necessary implementation of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency measures that can make a difference now. Let's face it, we need the safest, fastest, cleanest and cheapest sources of energy we can find to tackle the climate crisis. Nuclear power fails on all accounts.

But the nuclear industry is counting on Congress to miss that message and bail out the industry. In February 2009, they tried to get \$50 Billion in taxpayer loan guarantees to build new reactors and "clean coal" plants. A public uprising defeated them. But they're coming right back.

***Renewable Portfolio Standard.** In March, a new Senate energy bill—intended to establish a Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (RPS) among other provisions—will be unveiled.

Although this bill is likely to be much too weak, that would be a small step in the right direction.

But some senators are going to try to change it to a "clean" energy standard, and include nuclear power. This would completely distort the intent of promoting renewable energy, and could even provide new reactors with new financial incentives that should be reserved for renewables.

***Clean Energy Bank.** Again, a friendly-sounding concept coming from the Senate Energy Committee, but in this case it's an oxymoron. Because the push to set up such a bank is to fund—yep, you got it—new nuclear reactors and "clean coal" plants, not energy sources that are actually clean.

***More Loan Guarantees.** The nuclear industry already has \$18.5 Billion in taxpayer loan guarantees from the Department of Energy that hasn't yet been spent. But they're going to come back and try again for another \$50 Billion or more, probably in the FY 2010 Congressional appropriations bills, whether or not a Clean Energy Bank is established.

***Climate Legislation.** We all want strong climate legislation. Almost any likely climate bill—whether a carbon tax or cap-and-trade system—will indirectly benefit the nuclear industry. But a good climate bill can be crafted that provides more incentives for renewable energy and energy efficiency programs than for nuclear power or “clean coal.” But watch out, because the nuclear and coal industries are going to use the desire for a climate bill to promote their industries and provide more money for nuclear reactors and useless “clean coal” plants.

***Radioactive Waste.** President Obama campaigned on a platform to end the proposed, scientifically-indefensible Yucca Mountain, Nevada radioactive waste dump. And that is likely to happen. That’s the good news. The bad news is that the Department of Energy and some Congressmembers may then support reprocessing (sometimes called “recycling” by the industry) of radioactive waste. But reprocessing doesn’t obviate the need for a permanent radioactive waste repository, creates vast new nuclear proliferation risks and is probably the most dangerous and dirty nuclear technology of all. In France, for example, where some waste is reprocessed, 100 million gallons of liquid radioactive waste per year are dumped into the ocean. Most European countries have asked France to stop reprocessing.

***A Better Way: Carbon-Free, Nuclear-Free.** Some people claim that renewable energy just isn’t ready to meet our electricity needs. That was true 20 years ago, maybe even 10 years ago. But not now. *Carbon-Free, Nuclear-Free: A Roadmap for U.S. Energy Policy* provides a path for a better way. We can meet our electricity and transportation needs without nuclear power and fossil fuels, for about the same percentage of money we spend now on energy, and this book, published by the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research shows how. You can download it for free at www.ieer.org. And you can find numerous studies on nuclear power and climate at <http://www.nirs.org/climate/climate.htm> and safe, cost-effective alternatives to nuclear power and “clean coal” at

<http://www.nirs.org/alternatives/alternativeshome.htm>.

WHAT YOU CAN DO. The nuclear/coal industry—and they really are one—is one of the most powerful lobbying institutions in Washington. But we believe ordinary people, acting with knowledge and determination, are an even more powerful force. We showed that in February by blocking the \$50 Billion in taxpayer loan guarantees the industry tried to put in the stimulus bill. But future battles will be even more difficult. It will take all of us, including you.

Contact your elected officials regularly. The nuclear/coal industry does. We need to as well. Make sure they know where you stand.

Organize and mobilize your friends and colleagues; your universities and workplaces. Make sure everyone responds to the challenges before us, not just a couple of leaders.

Join NIRS e-mail Alert list. We’ll let you know when the nuclear/coal industry is attempting to make a move in Congress, and how you can stop them. We’ll provide the background information you need to be effective. We’ll make it easy to e-mail your legislators, and help you with phone calls. We’ll give you sample letters-to-the editor and op-eds to spread the word in the mainstream media and on blogs and websites across the world. We’ll tell you about upcoming actions. But we won’t clog your computer with junk e-mails or useless information. Just send your name, e-mail address, city, state and zip to nirsnet@nirs.org and we’ll help you stay informed, active and mobilized.—Michael Mariotte, February 2009

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