

## Public Hearing testimony on HB 2882 & SB4 Repeal of Conditional Nuclear Ban

By Gary Zuckett, Exec. Director, WV Citizen Action

1-28-2022

Note: I regret that I'll not be able to attend this public hearing in person due to being in quarantine after testing positive for Covid, so I'm preparing this statement to share with all House members as the bill has already passed out of committee. It used to be that public hearings were granted BEFORE a committee took action on a bill so as to get public input during the committee process. This new process of holding hearings after a bill has been reported to the floor makes these hearings more of a window dressing on a bill that's already on its way to passage. I would implore leadership to take a look at this and seek a remedy to restore the full value and importance of hearing from citizens on policies that will affect them and their communities before the "train has left the station".

When I volunteered at WV Citizen Action and lobbied to get this bill passed in 1996 it was [17 years after Three Mile Island](#), and only 10 years after Chernobyl. Fukushima wouldn't happen for another 15 years. Passage of this original bill made WV safe from ever experiencing such catastrophes or.

The legislature made [proper findings](#) for their conditions placed on siting commercial nuclear power. Please read them before you vote on this bill. They still make total sense and have not changed materially since then.

According to this [Chemical Engineering News article](#): "More than a quarter million metric tons of highly radioactive waste sits *in storage near nuclear power plants* and weapons production facilities worldwide, with *over 90,000 metric tons in the US alone*. Emitting radiation that can pose serious risks to human health and the environment, the waste, much of it decades old, awaits permanent disposal in geological repositories, *but none are operational*. With nowhere to go for now, the hazardous materials and their containers continue to age."

This waste, which will be deadly for countless generations, is a serious problem with nuclear power which remains to be solved. We've had nuclear power now since 1958 and we still don't have a place to dump its toxic, deadly waste. Do we want West Virginia dotted with nuclear hot spots? I hope not!

Proponents say not to worry, these so-called advanced nukes are modular, self contained and much smaller than the Three Mile Island/Chernobyl ones. They still use up toxic radioactive fuel that has to be contained somewhere. Since there is really no place that wants this stuff, it ends up being stored on site. In West Virginia? I hope not!

The original bill was passed before the 9/11 terrorist attack, which brings me to another drawback to opening up WV to Nukes right now. What would be the result of an intentional explosion at one of these atomic power plants? Would it contaminate only a city, a county, or a whole region of our state?

What will it cost? The original atomic power plants were promoted as being able to produce energy “too cheap to meter”. We all know how that turned out. Truth is its the most expensive way to generate electricity.

Proponents say that these ‘new generation’ modular nukes will be great for addressing Climate change but they’re still in development and won’t go online until the end of this decade. We need climate solutions now, not in 10 years!

Finally, what’s the rush? These so-called ‘advanced’ atomic power plants by all accounts aren’t to be operational until ‘the end of the decade’. That gives us plenty of time to research, debate, and do something better than just throwing out a law that has protected West Virginians from the dangers of nuclear power for 25 years.

The prudent thing to do would be to put these bills on hold, assemble an interim study, gather experts on both sides of this critical issue, and make a measured and informed decision. If we’re going to open up WV to nuclear power, let’s do it with proper regulations and safeguards for its people, economy and environment.

Thankyou for taking time to hear my testimony.