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No nuclear subsidies for FirstEnergy - and it should stop asking: editorial

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The Perry nuclear power plant viewed from the shore of Lake Erie at the Painesville Township Park in a 2003 file photo.

Supporters of FirstEnergy Corp. are seeking, in a new bill, to force Ohio ratepayers to subsidize the utility's nuclear plants, albeit at lower levels than in an earlier bill.(C.H. Pete Copeland, The Plain Dealer, File, 2003)

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By **Editorial Board**

When will FirstEnergy Corp. accept that no means no?

Over and over, the utility has been denied its attempts in Ohio to prop up its uncompetitive nuclear plants with fees tacked onto the bills of ratepayers. The plans have been almost universally condemned and rejected.

But FirstEnergy is back with a new plea, one that is roughly half what it wanted Ohio lawmakers to approve last time. Legislators' answer must still be "no."

The Perry and Davis-Besse nuclear power plants, near Cleveland and Toledo, respectively, can't compete with new natural-gas-fueled power plants. So, to help insulate FirstEnergy from its bad decisions, the utility wants to make

consumers pay. The latest effort would cost ratepayers roughly \$2.50 a month extra (about \$30 a year), The Plain Dealer's John Funk reported this week.

All told, House Bill 381, sponsored by Rep. Anthony DeVitis, a Green Republican, would allow Akron-based FirstEnergy to collect an extra \$180 million a year for 12 years. That's less than the \$300 million a year for 16 years the utility first sought. But no matter the amount, subsidizing Perry and Davis-Besse would be like subsidizing harness-makers just as Henry Ford started making cars. It's a bet on the past.

Among the DeVitis bill's co-sponsors are Republican Reps. Tom Patton of Strongsville; Kristina Roegner of Hudson; Marilyn Slaby of Akron; Ron Young of LeRoy Township in Lake County; and Democratic Reps. Martin Sweeney of Cleveland and Nicholas Celebrezze of Parma.

They and other lawmakers should shelve this misguided effort.

Then, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission should reject FirstEnergy's back-door efforts, via the Trump administration's recently proposed "Grid Resiliency Pricing Rule," to prop up coal and nuclear with what amounts to a subsidy in wholesale power markets.

Enough is enough. Just say no to FirstEnergy.

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