

Opponent Testimony HB308 12/10/24

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I am offering this opponent testimony for the simple reason that the premise of HB308, that nuclear power is “clean” energy, is false.

Nuclear power is dirty literally from beginning to end. Mining releases radioactive contaminants that have poisoned large swaths of the American west, especially in the Navajo Nation. Fuel fabrication creates huge volumes of radioactive wastes that have contaminated areas like Piketon, Fernald, France, Sellafield England, Japan, and thousands of sites around the world. “Normal” plant operations require routine radiation releases, and epidemiological studies routinely show cancer and miscarriage rates increasing around nuclear plants during their operation, that drop back to normal after plants close. The wastes from nuclear plants have contaminated hundreds of places around the globe, including the US's only approved waste storage site, the Waste Isolation Pilot Project in New Mexico which was supposed to have isolated wastes for tens of thousands of years, but instead has resulted in contamination of the surrounding area in just a few dozen years.

As you may know, nuclear wastes remain deadly for at least 240,000 years. That figure represents 10 half lives of plutonium, one of the deadliest isotopes. Plutonium is a completely man-made toxin. Any plutonium that was around when the Earth formed disappeared billions of years ago. Nothing we do today, none of our science, industry or entertainment justifies creating radioactive poison that will be killing, maiming, and sickening our descendants for hundreds of thousands of years. Christ said, “Whatever you do to the least of my brothers, that you do unto me.” Radiation hurts the unborn child more than any other. Children are more susceptible to radiation than adults. Women are more susceptible than men. Choosing to create more radioactive wastes is literally choosing to persecute the unborn, women, and children for longer than any of us can really claim to comprehend.

And this price does not need to be paid! Wind, solar, and storage technologies have finally arrived. They can more than supply all our energy needs without making the planet permanently less habitable. I have heard many myths from state legislators on this topic. They have claimed we need nuclear for “baseload” power. That is false. Two of the larger electrical grids on the planet, Germany and South Australia, have moved away from baseload. They are also two of the most stable grids on Earth, much more stable than their surrounding provinces and European countries, because “baseload” is inherently unstable. Whenever you pin grid stability on huge, centralized power plants when those plants inevitably suffer emergency shutdowns, it destabilizes the entire grid. South Korea last year suffered a regional blackout when one of their nuclear plants had to do an emergency shut down.

In the US, a nuclear plant crashes, on average, at least once a week. These crashes can be minor, such as a breaker tripping, or major such as fires and coolant leaks. But, every time a gigawatt of power drops out in a fraction of a second, the whole grid is in peril. That is why all nuke plants require coal or gas back ups that are kept constantly running, but idling, ready to start generating at a moment's notice. These plants put millions of tons of CO₂ into the air every year, just to keep our nuclear plants running.

So, even the “low carbon” label applied to nukes is a myth. Since HB 6, Ohio's energy policy has fallen further and further behind the rest of the world. Wind and solar, truly clean renewables, are growing all over the world. Ohio is stuck with last century's technologies: coal, gas, and nukes. The Ohio legislature should be working to put us back in the lead, not dropping us further behind with this dangerous nuclear fantasy.