

Senate Bill 128 – zero-emissions nuclear resource program
Ohio Senate Public Utilities Committee
Testimony of Lee Blackburn
June 8, 2017

Good morning Mr. Chairman; members of the Ohio Senate Public Utilities Committee. My name is Lee Blackburn and I am here as a private citizen, typical of a FirstEnergy ratepayer, a constituent if you will, to testify in opposition to S.B. 128. As a private citizen, I am not in any way being compensated for my appearance here today.

I was in this hearing room last Thursday and listened to the testimony of those in favor, those opposed and those who simply have an interest in SB 128. It appears to me, this proposed subsidy, to be involuntarily forced upon FirstEnergy ratepayers, of between \$5.25 billion and \$8.82 billion, according to the testimony last week by Mr. Lee Herrington; comes down to three issues: jobs, availability of electricity and clean energy.

According to various testimony last week, Davis Besse and Perry nuclear reactors each employ between 600 and 700 full-time workers and it can be devastating whenever a job loss occurs. Still, if these reactors were to shut down tomorrow, there would still be plenty of jobs for years to come in both decommissioning and clean-up work.

While 600 to 700 jobs may seem like a lot, it's no worse than the job loss right here in our own backyard with the closings of H.H. Gregg, Gander Mountain and the Andersons. And, it's just a drop in the bucket compared to the huge job losses from Sears and K-Mart, Macy's, Radio Shack, Staples, Payless ShoeSource and the list goes on. No one is proposing a subsidy for those jobs because that's the way a free market works. I say, as it relates to these jobs, we should let the market guide us.

Testimony last week also touched upon the need to subsidize these reactors in order to ensure sufficient electricity to avoid a potential crisis like what almost happened during the polar vortex in 2014. While this would have been a catastrophic disaster; it didn't happen. Rather, it became a lesson learned for PJM Interconnection, who in its latest annual, 3-year auction, for the period June, 2020 through May, 2021, showed a calculated reserve generating capacity margin of more than 23 percent higher than demand projections.

This means ratepayers will already be paying for a number of power plants that aren't really needed. Davis Besse and Perry combined represent only 5 percent of generating

capacity, so closing them would have little effect on reserve capacity, let alone generating capacity. I say, as it relates to availability of electricity, we should let the market guide us.

Finally, many of the proponents and interested parties touted the clean energy or carbon-free nature of nuclear power. While the carbon emissions from a nuclear reactor is quite low, along the lines of wind or solar, once you add it the front end process of mining, milling, enriching, transporting and storing the uranium ore, the amount of CO₂ released increases markedly.

According to a study by Dr. Benjamin Sovacool of the University of Suffolk, when the entire life cycle of a nuclear power plant is taken into account, nuclear emits twice as much carbon as solar photovoltaic and six times as much as an onshore wind farm. And this doesn't address the nasty issue of hazardous waste.

Instead of forcing ratepayers to spend billions of dollars to prop up failing nuclear reactors from yesteryear, with their toxic radioactive waste we still don't know what to do with, we should invest our money in the thousands of jobs created by producing the steel and concrete, the electronics and other components, needed to build a clean energy future of wind turbines, solar panels and energy efficiency. That's where the jobs are. That's where the tax base is. Trust in the market and look to the future.

Thank you.