

**TESTIMONY (REVISED) OF NUCLEAR ENERGY INFORMATION SERVICE
TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY REGARDING
AFFORDABLE CLEAN ENERGY (ACE) RULE
October 1, 2018, Chicago Illinois**

Nuclear Energy Information Service (NEIS) is a 37-year old environmental organization based in Chicago, Illinois. On behalf of the over 850 supporters in 22 states, we submit the following comments in opposition to the above proposed Rule:

- 1.) SCOPE OF THE RULE:** While it is clear that the Rule ostensibly deals with the emissions from coal facilities, nothing exists in a vacuum. The Rule has to be considered and evaluated in the larger context of the Trump Administration's stated goals of providing anti-market subsidization of both coal and nuclear electric generating facilities.

Using atmospheric carbon emissions as a fig-leaf for subsidies, both coal and nuclear plants have other negative environmental impacts that belie the title of "clean energy." To merely focus on this one contestable attribute – lower carbon emissions through heat-rate efficiency improvements in the case of coal plants, and lower greenhouse gas emissions in the case of nuclear plants – while ignoring and not properly valuing the larger negative environmental impact is both irrational, and poor energy policy.

In the case of the coal plants, these negative impacts include continued effects of coal mining, and production of coal ash, both of which have demonstrated tremendous negative environmental and economic impacts which persist whether heat-efficiency improvements are achieved or not. These costs must be factored into the calculus of the cost-benefit analysis.

In the case of nuclear plants hiding behind the "clean air" fig-leaf, the continued effects of uranium mining and other aspects of the nuclear fuel chain, production and disposal of radioactive wastes, the production of weapons usable materials, the tremendous costs associated with the need for enhanced safety and security systems, and finally the threat of catastrophic accidents and radioactive releases, either natural or human made – all increase the real world costs of nuclear to the point where they overtake any perceived "clean air" benefits, benefits that could have been achieved cheaper and quicker by other, non-nuclear means.

- 2.) ALLEGED "CLEAN" ENERGY:** The repeated attempts by the EPA, NRC and DOE to characterize dirty fossil and nuclear plants as "clean" is false, and unacceptable. To persist in this "greenwashing" attempt is disingenuous at best, venal at worst. There is nothing "clean" about coal or nuclear power. This is "linguistic de-toxification."

Claiming that more "efficient" use of coal is cleaner because you will attempt to get more energy by burning less coal, is a lot like saying we can reduce the murder rate in Chicago to "acceptable"

levels by putting better sights on street guns; or solving the obesity epidemic with a “healthy Twinkie” diet.

Claiming that nuclear power is “clean” because of the single attribute of producing very little CO2 in the energy production phase of operations ignores the many problems of nuclear power and the entire nuclear fuel chain life-cycle described in Section 1 above. It’s the kind of twisted illogical thinking that has given us the opioid crisis: after all, opioids relieve pain, don’t they?

3.) LIFE-CYCLE ASSESSMENT AND IGNORING LOST OPPORTUNITY COSTS:

Subsidizing the use of uneconomic coal and nuclear power while awarding them the fig-leaf justification of reducing CO2 emissions has additional downsides.

Prolonging the existence of the very energy resource – fossil fuels – that cause the CO2 problem to begin with wastes resources and capital better spent on methods that are cheaper and quicker at reducing CO2 levels. EPA needs to calculate the lost opportunity cost of continuing the operation of uneconomic CO2-producing coal plants that will prevent the needed implementation of more efficiency and renewable energy resources by taking up market share.

In the case of nuclear power a similar calculation of lost opportunity cost is illustrated by a quote from energy analyst Amory Lovins of Rocky Mountain Institute:

“More importantly, there are two basic methodological gaps: defining “clean” in terms only of GHGs, and tracking only carbon, not dollars, so climate opportunity cost is overlooked. A nuclear plant whose LCA [life-cycle assessment] shows lower GHG emissions than the already-low level for PVs (but not for wind, I notice, nor for efficiency, which isn’t compared) but that costs a lot more than they do **will probably be less climate-effective, i.e. save less carbon per dollar, than the cheaper option.** Nuclear power will also be slower, saving less carbon per year....” (emphasis ours).

Prolonging the life of uneconomic nuclear plants that would otherwise close again takes up market share that could and should be made up by renewable energy and efficiency. EPA’s Rule fails to calculate this lost opportunity cost for renewables, and fails to compare what that would be to the results of the uneconomic nuclear plants.

4.) CONCLUSION – creating disingenuous justifications for the continued operation of uneconomic coal and nuclear plants that otherwise would close by claiming reduced CO2 levels is fraudulent, poor energy policy, and should be rejected. Claiming that burning allegedly more efficient coal or operating uneconomic nuclear plants is better at CO2 reductions fails to analyze both the life-cycle costs and the lost opportunity costs that would have resulted from their replacement by more energy efficiency and renewable energy resources.

NEIS supports a Carbon-Free/Nuclear-Free energy future – and you can’t build a future by bailing out the past. As a result, this Rule should be retracted.

Thank you for your consideration of these views.