

PRESS RELEASE

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GOVERNOR SIGNS EXELON NUCLEAR BAILOUT BILL – INSURES CONTINUED NUCLEAR RISKS, RADIOACTIVE WASTE GENERATION

CHICAGO-- Governor Bruce Rauner signed the Exelon nuclear bailout bill into law today, insuring over the next 10 years a legislatively mandated \$2.35 billion rate hike, and the production of nearly 900 tons of additional high-level radioactive wastes and the other risks that nuclear power poses for Illinois.

“What a terrific Christmas gift for the children and future of Illinois,” quips David Kraft, director of Chicago-based Nuclear Energy Information Service.

“The issues of radioactive waste and continued nuclear risk were all but absent in the discussions related to the Exelon nuclear bailout bill,” notes Kraft. “Exelon was brilliant in distracting everyone with issues they knew would be flops, like the demand charge, so that the main goal – bailing out failed nuclear reactors -- would be achieved, and serious issues like nuclear waste and reactor safety would be avoided,” Kraft observes.

Illinois has more operating reactors than any other state – eleven, with three permanently closed. As a result it also stores the most high-level radioactive waste (HLRW) in the form of the “spent” reactor fuel – over 10,000 tons as of current inventory. All HLRW ever created at these reactors is stored at the reactor sites, with no place to go for disposal at present.

Continued nuclear risk is also a concern. The now bailed out Quad Cities reactors are among the oldest reactors in the country, and are the same design and older than the reactors that melted down and exploded at Fukushima in Japan in 2011. Concerns have also been raised about the earthen dam that creates the vital cool pond for the downstate Clinton reactor, also now bailed out.

Continued reactor operation means more radioactive wastes will be created, with no place to go; more radioactive emissions -- yes, nuclear reactors are NOT emissions-free! – into the air and water, and continued vulnerability to nuclear accidents and potential disasters. To paraphrase nuclear engineer David Lochbaum of the Union of Concerned Scientists, “One ‘bad day at the office’ can ruin an entire economy for decades.”

“Governor Rauner has demonstrated either total ignorance or total disregard for these critical safety issues,” Kraft asserts. “That’s no way for a chief executive to run the most nuclear-reliant state in the U.S.,” he concludes.

“If one were to amortize the \$2.35 billion electric rate hike bailout over the 1,500 direct jobs Exelon claims would be lost if it had closed the Clinton and Quad Cities nuclear stations, Governor Rauner and Exelon are forcing Illinois ratepayers to pay \$1.57 million per job “saved.” We could buy these workers out cheaper, close the reactors, and stop the production of 900 tons of high-level radioactive wastes over the next 10 years,” Kraft points out.

NEIS will be pressing for future action on radioactive waste management and decommissioning; and on creating a “just transitions” program to prevent future economic crises from reactor closures.

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NEIS was founded in 1981 to provide the public with credible information on nuclear power, waste, and radiation hazards; and information about the viable energy alternatives to nuclear power. For more information visit the NEIS website at: <http://www.neis.org>