

ORAL TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO SB76
The Repeal of Illinois Nuclear Construction Moratorium

April 18, 2023

By David A. Kraft, Director

Nuclear Energy Information Service (NEIS) is a 42-year old nuclear watchdog, safe-energy advocacy organization based in Chicago. On behalf of our members, we thank you for the opportunity to provide these remarks today.

This hearing marks the 5th time in 2 years we have come before the Legislature to register our opposition to the repeal of the 1987 Illinois nuclear power construction Moratorium, in this case SB76. Hundreds of Illinoisans have signed petitions to preserve the Moratorium. Sixteen organizations have co-signed a letter supporting the Moratorium and more renewables that has been sent to the Governor. Numerous significant Illinois environmental groups such as Sierra Club, Illinois Environmental Council, Greenpeace, LVEJO, People for Community Recovery and others oppose the Moratorium repeal, recognizing it for the environmental danger it represents.

We have provided detailed, technical and sourced references in our written comments as to why the moratorium repeal is horrendous public policy, and why oblique, unstated but often referenced support of so-called “small modular nuclear reactors” (SMNRs) is not sound energy policy nor in the best interests of Illinois. We will mention a few below, and encourage you to both read the testimony and the 20 references provided; and contact us again if you have questions or need for more information.

As we have repeatedly stated, Moratorium repeal is premature and not in Illinois’ best interests. First and foremost it explicitly deals with disposal of high-level radioactive wastes, a topic assiduously avoided or minimized in all the 2023 hearings so far by legislators endorsing repeal. Instead many pro-nuclear advocates’ have opportunistically turned the Moratorium repeal into

de facto trade-shows seeking unexamined, uncritical endorsement for SMNRs at every hearing we have testified at. Smart business people and legislators usually conduct a “cost-benefit” analysis for costly and risky enterprises. So far, our legislature has only mouthed “benefit-benefit” analyses, failing to critically examine the many well-documented downsides of SMNRs described in detail in our written testimony, and those of our expert witnesses, Dr. Edwin Lyman of Union of Concerned Scientists, and M.V. Ramana of University of British Columbia, Vancouver. *Caveat emptor*.

Worse still are the many straw-person and red-herring arguments offered for Moratorium repeal, and embracing SMNRs, such as:

Jobs creation has repeatedly been offered as evidence to promote SMNRs and repeal the Moratorium. Some state that the Moratorium discourages potential SMNR investors from coming to Illinois. As we have REPEATEDLY pointed out for two years, Illinois energy future rests on the aggressive development of and investment in renewable energy, energy efficiency, energy storage (and NOT just batteries), and greatly improved and redesigned transmission – all energy and jobs producers TODAY, not in 2035 when at best SMNRs might be commercialized – IF the designs actually work. That’s one big gamble. The number of Illinois jobs already provided by renewable energy (22,999, end of 2021) and energy efficiency (82,592, end of 2021) far exceed the number of current nuclear power jobs (3,726 as of 2022). Their numbers are reliably verified by history and current reality. No such reliable figures exist for the non-existent SMNRs; it’s all speculation.

Some have speciously argued that we need more nuclear power because **there aren’t enough renewables available**. That is a political and utility self-fulfilling prophecy, not a limitation of the technology. If there aren’t enough renewables then – BUILD THEM. Attract those investors pro-nuclear people are worried we will scare off by retaining an environmentally protective

nuclear Moratorium. Improve transmission access to existing renewables here, in Iowa and elsewhere which has been historically thwarted ComEd/Exelon interference. Invite experts like Dr. Mark Jacobson of Stanford University, or Dr. Amory Lovins the co-founder of Rocky Mountain Institute or Dr. Arjun Makhijani of the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research to develop an implementation plan, *as they have already done in other states*. As Mark Twain once quipped, it's better to KNOW than to SUPPOSE. We would add – it's better to plan an act, than be afraid of the dark, literally and figuratively.

Finally, we have observed in these Hearings to date that Moratorium proponents don't even use the correct terminology in attempting to make their case, conflating "moratorium" with "ban," and "disposal" with "storage" of radioactive wastes. This demonstrates a profound ignorance of the issue, calling into serious question their ability to legislate on a matter they clearly are not informed enough about.

To summarize:

- 1.) Oppose Moratorium repeal until its condition is met: i.e., the federal government has a functioning disposal facility certified by the director of IL EPA; and
- 2.) Do not let the unsubstantiated promises of the next nuclear boondoggle – SMNRs – distract Illinois from the energy future envisioned and planned in CEJA. Because they do not even exist and won't until the 2030s – assuming the designs work at all -- SMNRs are no climate solution according the qualified experts. They will provide no jobs or tax benefits to communities until then, while renewables, efficiency and storage already provide those TODAY. They are already calculated to be more expensive per unit of energy produced than even today's uneconomic and bailed-out nuclear reactors. And finally – they will produce more high-level radioactive wastes per unit of energy than

today's reactors as well – PRECISELY the situation that the Moratorium was enacted to prevent.

Albert Einstein once remarked that clever people solve problems. Geniuses avoid them.

Illinois' energy future could use a healthy dose of genius right now. Your call.

Thank you for your consideration of these remarks. We are available to answer questions, and provide sources for our assertions.