

Nuclear Power

Background:

Current law prohibits the construction of nuclear power plants unless the nation has a facility with sufficient capacity to receive the spent fuel from all nuclear power plants in Wisconsin and the construction of the power plant is economically advantageous to ratepayers.

Because of this “moratorium,” no new nuclear plants have been built here and the existing ones at Kewaunee and Point Beach are aging and will need to be replaced eventually.

The federal government has banned commercial reprocessing of spent fuel, fearing that it would allow for proliferation of nuclear weapons. Without reprocessing, greater volumes of fuel rods need to be stored as waste and the remaining energy that could be generated from them is unutilized.

In addition, the government has failed to complete an appropriate location for a nuclear repository despite the fact that ratepayers have been contributing to fund a centralized national facility at Yucca Mountain, Nevada.

The concerns over spent fuel are important to Wisconsin electric cooperatives, as members have been paying \$6 million a year to maintain Dairyland’s reactor at Genoa, which has been closed since 1987.

The U.S. nuclear power industry has provided emissions-free generation with exemplary reliability, without any incident involving loss of life connected with nuclear power plant operations at any time throughout its history.

The Governor’s Task Force on Global Warming proposed modifications to state law, acknowledging the need to evaluate nuclear power’s low carbon content, but falling short of directly supporting lifting of the moratorium.

Key Points about Nuclear Power:

- ◆ Allowing reprocessing of spent fuel rods would generate more usable energy and reduce waste.
- ◆ Interim storage options could be considered as a short-term solution until a permanent repository is located.
- ◆ Nuclear power plants have been a critical component of Wisconsin’s generation mix for decades, supplying 20% of Wisconsin’s electricity.
- ◆ Nuclear power does not emit carbon and does not contribute to global warming.
- ◆ Safe disposal of spent fuel is limited by politics not scientific or safety concerns.
- ◆ Present Wisconsin law effectively prevents even the consideration of developing new nuclear generation capacity, potentially to the detriment of a balanced energy mix, greater self-reliance and using an environmentally friendly fuel source.

Action: Ask your legislator to ◆ support future legislation lifting the nuclear moratorium ◆