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Nuclear Provisions in Energy Bill Are an Atomic Waste!

“Economic viability for a nuclear power plant is difficult to demonstrate...”¹

Lawmakers should reject dangerous nuclear provisions contained in the House energy bill, detailed below:

- W** promotion of reprocessing and other dangerous nuclear waste technologies
- W** public funding towards the construction of new nuclear power plants
- W** reauthorization of the Price-Anderson Act

Rather than pandering to the interests of the nuclear industry, more appropriate forward-looking policy would promote safe, clean, and affordable energy by investing in conservation, efficiency, and renewables.

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Reprocessing: Compounding Nuclear Waste Risks

- **reverses long-standing U.S. policy against nuclear waste reprocessing, needlessly augmenting security and environmental threats**

In apparent contradiction to the government’s Homeland Security efforts, the energy bill would promote technologies for reprocessing irradiated nuclear fuel. The bill provides \$399 million over the next four years to fund the Department of Energy’s new Advanced Fuel Cycle Initiative, which aims to deploy commercial nuclear fuel reprocessing technologies by 2015. Rejected by U.S. non-proliferation policy since the 1970s, these costly technologies separate weapons-usable plutonium from high-level radioactive waste. Reversing the U.S. ban on reprocessing would set a dangerous precedent, encouraging other countries to create plutonium industries and adding hundreds of tons to global plutonium stockpiles that already pose serious proliferation and security risks. Reprocessing and other “spent fuel technologies” will not solve the

¹ *A Roadmap to Deploy New Nuclear Power Plants in the United States by 2010*. Prepared for the U.S. Department of Energy’s Office of Nuclear Energy, Science and Technology (October 2001).

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nuclear waste problem. In fact, these messy processes create their own hazardous waste streams that as liquids and gasses are even more difficult to manage than waste that has not been reprocessed.

New Nuclear Reactors... At Taxpayers' Expense

- **authorizes funding for the Bush Administration's *Nuclear Power 2010* program and "industry/government cost sharing" towards the construction of new nuclear reactors**

The House energy bill directs the Department of Energy to promote the Administration's misdirected *Nuclear Power 2010* program and "aggressively pursue activities that will result... in the construction and start-up of new nuclear power plants in the United States by 2010." The Administration has adopted the nuclear industry's goal of 50 new reactors by 2020. The program contemplates a series of unusual taxpayer subsidies for nuclear generators, including 50/50 cost sharing for initial phases, federal preferred equity and government power-purchase agreements at above-market rates. New nuclear power plants would shoulder the public with tax liabilities while imposing additional safety and security threats. Given the current controversy surrounding high-level radioactive waste management, the government should not be funding the construction of new reactors, which will only add to the nuclear waste problem.

Price-Anderson: An Insurance Scam for the Nuclear Industry

- **reauthorizes the Price-Anderson Act, extending insurance subsidies to proposed new nuclear power plants**

Reauthorizing the Price-Anderson Act is not only risky but also incongruous with current Congressional efforts to promote corporate accountability. By allowing nuclear operators to insure commercial reactors at levels far below the calculated cost of serious accident, the Price-Anderson Act leaves the public unprotected, power plant owners unaccountable, and taxpayers on the hook for potentially billions of dollars in the event of a nuclear catastrophe. Reauthorizing the Price-Anderson Act would extend this indirect subsidy - estimated to range from \$3.45 million to \$33 million per reactor per year in terms of foregone insurance premiums - to proposed new reactors (existing reactors are covered regardless through a grandfathering clause) and offers special treatment for untested "modular" reactor designs. The Price-Anderson Act was originally enacted in 1957 as a temporary measure to assist the fledgling nuclear industry. Nearly half a century later, there can be no justification for continuing to subsidize this mature industry.