

NEWS RELEASE

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NEW REPORT: CLEAN ENERGY CHEAPER, SAFER, QUICKER AND MORE RELIABLE THAN NUCLEAR POWER

Public Hearing on August 12th will allow statewide input

Baltimore – Clean energy technologies are likely to be cheaper, safer and more reliable than a proposed nuclear reactor at Calvert Cliffs according to a new Maryland PIRG report released at a news conference today outside Constellation Energy headquarters.

The report “Powering Maryland's Future: How Clean Energy Outperforms Nuclear Power in Delivering Reliable, Safe and Affordable Electricity,” compares a nuclear strategy with a clean energy strategy on the basis of reliability, cost, safety, environmental impact and support for Maryland’s growing economy.

“Our state’s leaders must not allow big power companies like Constellation to dictate our energy future. We need to get all the options in the table and then choose the best deal for the people of the state,” said Johanna Neumann, State Director of Maryland PIRG.

The Maryland Public Service Commission predicts Maryland could see blackouts as early as 2011. The proposed reactor will not come online until 2015, too late to meet the state’s short-term reliability challenges. By contrast, energy efficiency techniques and technologies can be implemented rapidly. By prioritizing the EmPOWER Maryland energy efficiency goals passed last session, the state will save 1.4 times as much power as would be generated by the new reactor at Calvert Cliffs in 2015.

“We need immediate action to address global warming and can't afford to wait for expensive new nuclear reactors," said Ethan Nuss, Campus Coordinator with the Chesapeake Climate Action Network. "Renewable energy is cleaner, safer, faster, cheaper and more reliable than nuclear power. As the third most vulnerable state to global warming we must act now to address this growing threat with safe, renewable energy technology that will reenergize our economy with thousands of new green jobs.”

Nuclear power is 2-5 times more expensive than clean energy options. Recent estimates have placed the lifetime average cost of nuclear power in the range of 12 to 15 cents per kWh. In comparison, commercial energy efficiency measures are available at an average cost of 2 cents per kWh. And recently signed contracts for wind power in the mid-Atlantic have come in just above 8 cents per kWh.

“The cost of a solar powered system is becoming more and more competitive as the industry grows,” said Shannon Schmidt, co-owner of St. Mary’s County based Solar Tech, Inc.

A clean energy path will provide a safer more secure supply of electricity than a new nuclear reactor. Although the new reactor would produce relatively little global warming pollution and health-damaging air pollution, the new reactor would produce about 1,380 tons of highly radioactive spent fuel. No nation on earth has developed an acceptable solution for safely disposing of radioactive waste.

“By choosing energy efficiency and clean energy and sustainable lifestyles we can avoid thousands of tons of radioactive waste and continue to retire our state’s aging coal-fired power plants,” said Rabbi Nina Beth Cardin of the Baltimore Jewish Environmental Network.

As part of the process for siting the new nuclear reactor, Constellation Energy and their partners Areva, must obtain a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity from the Maryland Public Service Commission (PSC). The PSC will hold evidentiary hearings in August and several members of the Chesapeake Safe Energy Coalition have submitted testimony regarding the cost of the reactor and the PSC’s authority to examine cost as part of the proceeding. The Commission will decide whether to approve Constellation Energy’s application by the end of the year.

As part of the process, the PSC is also required to hold 3 public meetings in Calvert County next month, which makes it difficult for residents from other parts of the state to make their voices heard. As such, the Chesapeake Safe Energy Coalition has organized an alternate public meeting for August 12 at the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Downtown Baltimore. The coalition will record public comments made at the meeting for submission into the PSC record.

“I’m excited that there are cleaner and safer ways to make electricity,” said Julia Clark, a Calvert County resident who has encouraged her neighbors to attend the PSC hearings. “You don’t have to worry about terrorist attacks on a wind turbine.”

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To download the full report go to www.marylandpirg.org and click on reports. For more information about the coalition visit www.safeenergymd.org.