

December 1st, 2020

Ohio nuclear power plant legislation assailed by safe energy and environmental groups

Dirty, dangerous, and expensive, Ohio's nuclear energy bailout bill, HB 104, contains not only statewide, but also regional and national risks.



By [Beyond Nuclear](#)

On November 29, 2020, [56 local, regional and national environmental, public health and safe energy organizations](#) blasted proposed House Bill 104, the "Advanced Nuclear Technology Helping Energize Mankind Act" ("ANTHEM Act") pending in the Ohio General Assembly.

Calling the proposal a "radioactive taxpayer giveaway," the groups, representing hundreds of thousands of people, filed written testimony for a December 1 Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee hearing along with a one-page overview with [10 reasons to oppose HB 104](#).

The activists warn that building state-sponsored small modular nuclear power reactors (SMRs) "will break the bank and destroy Ohio's chances for a clean and safe energy future" especially given COVID-related budgetary constraints and that ANTHEM could cause nuclear weapons proliferation, threats to public health and safety, radioactive contamination, and require huge, undetailed governmental subsidies.

The Ohio State Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee is set to vote on HB104, tomorrow. This bill would turn Ohio into a nuclear waste dump, creating an "authority" made up of industry insiders which would promote the nuclear industry with tax dollars, unregulated.

— Unplug Nuclear Power (@Unplugnukes) [November 30, 2020](#)



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House Bill (“HB”) 104 is being pushed by eGeneration Foundation, a Cleveland company that envisions thorium and molten-salt nuclear power reactors, which have never gotten beyond small-scale experiments and show few prospects of commercial success. The company will not say where it would build several full-scale SMRs. There are no provisions for community or public involvement in the creation of an Ohio Nuclear Development Authority (NDA) to issue taxpayer-backed bonds for reactor construction. The NDA would be governed by a board of nuclear industry insiders within the Ohio Department of Commerce. In the House committee hearings Rep. Dick Stein, HB 104’s sponsor, [could not answer the question of who the Authority would be responsible to.](#)

HB 104 has passed the Ohio House and may be discharged from the Senate committee on Tuesday for a floor vote in December, as the legislature resumes its “lame duck” session. Location of the agency within the Ohio Department of Commerce would mean that nuclear promotion, not regulation of health and safety, would be the priority, and that Ohio taxpayers would be liable for cleanup and dismantling when reactors close – or worse, after spills and accidents. The bill also allows for eminent domain.

- **[Even before the bribery scandal, pro-life Christians opposed Ohio’s anti-environment nuclear bailout](#)**

Only New York State has ever set up a state nuclear development agency, which resulted in construction of a disastrous nuclear waste reprocessing plant at [West Valley, New York](#) in the 1960’s. The venture has so far cost \$600 million in cleanup and partial remediation, and tens of billions of dollars more will be needed for future cleanup costs to keep radioactive contamination from spreading.

“Enacting this self-inflicted fiscal nightmare in the midst of a pandemic will surely crimp provision of existing services by the government,” said Pat Marida, chair of the Ohio Sierra Club’s Nuclear Free Committee. “This untried technology will swallow up major financing that must instead be made immediately available to build genuine safe energy options to reduce the worst effects of climate chaos.”

“eGeneration won’t admit the potential for deadly accidents from operating test reactors and from the dirty, radioactive-waste-producing processes to extract enriched uranium and plutonium (one of the most toxic substances on earth) from radioactive waste,” said Connie Kline, past Chair of the Ohio Sierra Club Nuclear Committee. “This bill creates national security concerns about the spread of nuclear weapons. The fuel required by these reactors are literally thermonuclear bomb ingredients that will command hefty prices on global black markets.”



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"Hasn't the General Assembly learned any lessons from the corruption around HB 6, the coal and nuclear bailout?" asked Lee Blackburn of the Sierra Club's Nuclear Free Committee.

"ANTHEM is a classic corporate welfare response for ideas too risky and half-baked to work in the so-called 'free market,'" offered Terry Lodge, Toledo attorney. "Why should billions more public dollars be risked on experiments that haven't perfected these dangerous processes in the last 55 years?"

"Reprocessing is environmentally ruinous," said Kevin Kamps, radioactive waste specialist at Beyond Nuclear. "As shown in France, the U.K., upstate New York, and other places, plutonium and uranium extraction from high-level radioactive waste inevitably results in large-scale releases of hazardous, long-lasting ionizing radiation into the air and surface waters, such as the Great Lakes or Ohio River, that threaten people downwind, downstream, up the food chain, and down the generations."