



South Carolina Chapter Sierra Club  
1314 Lincoln Street Suite 201  
Columbia, S.C. 29201  
Sierra Club Nuclear Issues Activist Team  
408 C St N  
Washington DC 20002

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508 Hampton Street  
Suite 202  
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Senator Graham,

The Executive Committee, staff, and leadership of the South Carolina Sierra Club, representing over 5,000 members and thousands of other supporters, are writing to thank you for showing leadership around the issue of climate change. We still have many global warming deniers here in South Carolina, holding us back from making real progress on the changes impacting our state. We are thankful you recognize the problems associated with the burning of fossil fuels and are willing to work towards sensible solutions.

We are also writing to urge you to support comprehensive clean energy and climate legislation that **supports the most efficient, economical and environmentally safe energy sources**. These sources must not only reduce green house gases but also do so in the cleanest, fastest and safest way possible. These sources should also work to stimulate the American economy, create jobs and, as much as possible, be homegrown and contribute to our energy independence.

We know that you are an avid supporter of new nuclear power, and you believe it to be a solution to climate change; **however, we do not see how new nuclear power meets *any* of the criteria so necessary for our energy future**, and we wish to call to your attention just some of the reasons Sierra Club believes nuclear is a wrong choice and, therefore, cannot support it:

- **Too expensive for consumers:** Nuclear power is not just expensive; it is becoming the most expensive energy source. Cost comparisons will show that building a new fleet of nuclear power plants will far exceed the costs of other, better energy options. Our power bills will rise dramatically, as will consumer costs due to higher rates, which will be passed along to consumers through higher costs of goods and services.
- **Too expensive for taxpayers:** The estimated costs of new nuclear power plants have tripled since 2000. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates the likelihood of default for loans made to nuclear reactor developers to be “well above 50 percent.” The signal coming from the market place is clear: the nuclear industry, even

after high levels of cradle-to-grave subsidies and incentives provided by the federal government, is too expensive and risky. **Overall, electricity produced by new reactors would cost two to three times more than renewable energy and efficiency measures.** Nuclear is also becoming completely **socialized in its reliance on taxpayer handouts**, Construction Work in Progress (CWIP) laws and Federal loan guarantees.

- **Poisonous and polluting long into the future:** Nuclear power, despite attempts to characterize it as such, is not clean. From the mining of uranium to the disposition of nuclear waste, enormous streams of toxic chemicals and long lived radioactive wastes are created at every step of the fuel chain. These poisonous waste streams will be a deadly legacy to future generations. As residents living in a state already over-burdened by half a century of nuclear waste dumping, we know you are sensitive to the issue of nuclear waste.
- **No place to put radioactive waste:** Yucca Mountain will not open for many well documented, scientific reasons, and reprocessing spent fuel has proven highly radioactive waste producing, dangerous, and **spectacularly expensive**. The only commercial reprocessing venture in our country, in West Valley, New York, was a commercial and environmental disaster, resulting in millions, soon to be billions, of dollars of taxpayer money to remediate the site. Here in South Carolina, we are still paying for and attempting to deal with the DOE legacy of high-level liquid waste created from the reprocessing of spent fuel at SRS. Across our nation, billions of taxpayer dollars have been spent trying to clean up or contain radioactive waste from the nuclear fuel chain.
- **Nuclear Power is not “homegrown”:** Virtually every part of the nuclear chain is dependent on foreign corporations, governments, or nationalized companies. In 2007, more than 90% of the uranium used for U.S. nuclear power plants was imported from other countries. The U.S. only has the ninth largest, reasonably assured uranium resources in the world, and most of it is low to medium grade, which is not only more polluting but also less economical than the uranium imported from other nations. The U.S.’s high-priced uranium resources and world uranium price volatility mean that our dependence on foreign sources of uranium is not likely to change significantly in the future.

Another reason nuclear power cannot be considered homegrown is the fact we no longer have forges large enough to manufacture reactor parts in this country. Reactor pressure vessels and other major reactor component parts come from South Korea, Japan, Italy, and other countries. Billions of dollars will leave our economy with the nuclear choice. **This dependence on foreign sources is not contributing to true energy independence.**

- **Too slow to impact climate change:** Building a fleet of new reactors **will take decades**, not nearly fast enough to address climate change. The first plants will only serve to replace aging reactors coming to the end of their production lives. The nuclear industry has a long, well documented history of cost overruns and schedule delays caused by construction and design problems. The NRC has not yet approved the new Westinghouse AP1000 design, and the AREVA EPR reactor design has come under intense criticism in Europe for safety design flaws. **Climate change and energy**

**independence can be achieved much cheaper and faster through efficiency measures** as well as wind, solar, geothermal, tidal and other clean energy sources.

- **Adds to risk of terrorism and nuclear weapons proliferation:** A revival of nuclear power and reprocessing will create a new market for proliferation concerns in a world dominated by fears of terrorism. The French, Russians and British are struggling to manage the tons of stockpiled Plutonium they created in their rush to reprocess, resulting in arguably the world's most terrifying security threat. Reactors themselves will become targets. More nuclear power plants and ancillary industries will require a police state kind of mentality to protect them from terrorists who see nuclear materials or nuclear facilities as ultimate weapons. Sierra Club believes that the necessity of such extreme security measures in a nuclear based economy is antithetical to U.S. energy independence and our cherished civil liberties.

Senator Graham, climate change demands sound investments in economical, expedient, clean and, most of all, safe technologies. Nuclear power is simply an ineffective and risky tool for addressing climate change. The Sierra Club firmly believes a myriad of better options exist. Options that will not only be cheaper, cleaner and faster, but also will create more jobs, stimulate our economy, be truly homegrown and will not contribute to the risk of terrorism or require centuries of waste management.

We urge you to re-think your position on nuclear power, and move towards funding and supporting major investment in energy efficiency programs, off shore and land-based wind, solar and a host of other technologies that can meet our energy needs in a truly clean energy future.

Sincerely

Susan Corbett  
Chair, S.C. Chapter Sierra Club  
Chair, National Sierra Club Nuclear Issues Activist Team