CLEAN WATER ACTION

MICHIGAN

March 16, 2011

Dear Honorable Members of the Senate Energy and Technology Committee,

On behalf of Clean Water Action's over 250, 000 Michigan members, I strongly urge you to oppose House Concurrent Resolution No. 4.

Clean Water Action believes that nuclear power is not a good answer for Michigan's power generation needs. The recent disasters in Japan are an excellent example for why nuclear energy can never be truly safe.

Michigan should be maximizing clean energy sources, not dirty power that will burden future generations with pollution. When its entire lifecycle is considered, nuclear power is by no means "carbon- neutral" and the hundreds of thousands of year legacy of nuclear waste is not worth minimal potential carbon savings.

Options like energy efficiency come in at less than 1/5 the cost of nuclear power and bring valuable jobs to the state. Wind and solar power have just begun to be tapped, and new innovations in clean, alternative energy are being developed every day. Continued and expanded reliance on nuclear power directly takes away from investments in these new industries that have the power to bring back our economy. Nuclear power has never been able prove itself in the marketplace, and still relies heavily on taxpayer subsidies.

Many people are under the impression that nuclear power is essential to keeping the lights on. However, the chairman of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has stated that "baseload" power is a thing of the past, since interconnected clean energy sources can be distributed all across the country. Some energy storage solutions already exist, and other cutting-edge ways to counter the variability of alternative sources of energy are being developed here in our own state.

Clean Water Action also finds nuclear power inappropriate due to massive water use. It takes billions of gallons of water a year to cool a nuclear plant, and as seen in Japan, when not properly cooled, nuclear meltdown can occur. As water resources become scarcer due to overuse of aquifers, population growth, and increased droughts and evaporation caused by climate disruption, the industrial-scale usage of water to cool nuclear power plants is increasingly a major concern.

Clean Water Action acknowledges that the biggest issue with nuclear power is its deadly radioactive waste. We believe we should protect our residents from regular releases of low-level nuclear material that has been documented at Michigan plants. Even low-level ionizing waste creates higher cancer risks, which is intolerable when cleaner alternatives exist.

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Long-term, centralized storage for nuclear waste may sound like a good answer for Michigan's high-level radioactive waste. However, Clean Water Action cannot support long term storage of nuclear waste without a moratorium on nuclear power, since if the existing waste currently stored on-site in pools or dry casks is removed, it would just be replaced with *new* spent fuel rods from reactors. Therefore, long-term storage would create an incentive to increase the use of existing plants or spur investments in new nuclear power, thus burdening our earth with a greater amount of toxic waste.

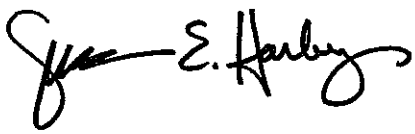
Long term centralized storage is also inadvisable because shipping high level radioactive waste cross-country is an unreasonable threat to homeland security. Our communities would be at risk as high-level nuclear waste traveled vulnerable to attack or accident over the rails or on our Great Lakes.

Reprocessing nuclear waste is not a viable solution, despite France's supposed headway on the technology. Not only is it expensive, but recycling waste does not actually get rid of any waste. And the final product, while smaller, is still as deadly as our waste, but weapons-grade plutonium is created as a byproduct. France has given this "peaceful" nuclear reprocessing technology to countries with extremely volatile political atmospheres. Additionally, the French have not found a long term storage solution for their waste, and residents rioted to ensure the radioactive waste was not entombed near them.

Clean Water Action is part of a coalition of national and local environmental groups that have agreed upon the "Principles for Safeguarding Nuclear Waste at Reactors,"(attached) last revised in 2010. They recommend as an interim solution to first store fuel in protected fuel pools, if built to withstand attack, and then transfer the fuel to hardened on-site (HOSS) storage facilities at the plant, unless the site is unsuitable for HOSS. Interim HOSS also keeps nuclear waste somewhat accessible, should science find something in the future that makes it less deadly for human beings.

Calling for long-term storage will not solve the nuclear waste crisis in this state unless we stop new nuclear waste from being generated. I urge you to oppose House Concurrent Resolution No. 4, because the Michigan Legislature must take a stand against dangerous nuclear power and focus on maximizing our state's potential for a clean, alternative energy economy.

Sincerely,



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