

April 9, 2007

Dear Senator:

As public interest and labor organizations concerned about the safety of our nation's 103 operating nuclear power reactors, we are writing to urge you to support Senator Bernie Sanders' legislation (S. 1008) that would enable States to request independent safety assessments by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) at nuclear power plants.

Under this legislation, States may make these requests when plant owners seek to increase the maximum power output or extend the operating lifetime of their facilities or when the NRC's performance ratings for the plants decline. Sen. Sanders' bill satisfies widening public demand for credible assurance that nuclear plant safety margins are not being compromised.

Equally important, Sen. Sanders' bill would require safety problems identified by the independent safety assessments to be corrected *before* the NRC approves the power level increase or the 20-year license renewal. Experience, such as at the Quad Cities nuclear plant in Illinois, has shown that increasing power output can lead to vibration that causes leaks, damage to critical components, and other events that increase the likelihood of an accident.

The NRC has granted 20-year license extensions to 48 reactors thus far, based largely on paper reviews of the aging components, rather than on-the-ground inspections. The reviews also exclude some safety components, such as emergency core cooling pumps, which the NRC assumes the plant operator is keeping in good condition. Conducting an independent safety assessment could potentially identify problems before public safety is put at risk.

The NRC contends that its existing regulatory processes ensure adequate protection of public health and safety. But few outside of the NRC and the industry it attempts to regulate share that belief. Sen. Sanders' bill seeks to provide the public with the assurance it lacks from the NRC's business-as-usual scheme. The public certainly deserves that assurance. We applaud Sen. Sanders for taking this step and urge you to support this bill.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

Michele Boyd, Legislative Director
Public Citizen

Dave Lochbaum, Nuclear Safety Engineer
Union of Concerned Scientists

Will Callaway, Legislative Director
Physicians for Social Responsibility

Anna Aurilio, Director, Washington DC
Office
U.S. Public Interest Research Group (U.S.
PIRG)

Stephen Lerner, Assistant to the President
Service Employees International Union

Dave Hamilton, Director, Global Warming
and Energy Programs
Sierra Club

Paul Gunter, Director, Reactor Watchdog
Program
Nuclear Information and Resource Service

Jim Riccio, Nuclear Policy Analyst
Greenpeace

State Organizations

Rochelle Becker, Executive Director
Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility, CA

Keith Gunter
Citizens' Resistance at Fermi Two, MI

Jane Swanson, Spokesperson and Board
Member
San Luis Obispo Mothers for Peace, CA

Norm Cohen, Executive Director
Coalition for Peace and Justice, NJ
and
UNPLUG Salem Campaign, NJ

Bobbie Paul, Director
Atlanta WAND, GA

Sidney J. Goodman
SJG Design, NJ

Glenn Carroll, Coordinator
Tom Ferguson
Nuclear Watch South, GA

Lisa Rainwater, PhD, Indian Point
Campaign Director
Riverkeeper, NY

David A. Kraft, Director
Nuclear Energy Information Service (NEIS),
IL

Jim Warren, Executive Director
NC WARN (North Carolina Waste
Awareness & Reduction Network)

Mary Davis
Yggdrasil, KY

Judith Johnsrud, Director
Environmental Coalition on Nuclear Power,
PA

Deb Katz, Director
Citizens Awareness Network

Susan Corbett, Conservation Chair
South Carolina Sierra Club

Raymond Shadis, Executive Director
Earth Day Commitment (dba/ Friends of the
Coast), MA

Allison Peeler
Carolina Peace Resource Center, SC

Sandra Gavutis
C-10 Research and Education Foundation,
MA

Diana Sidebotham, President
New England Coalition - On Nuclear
Pollution, VT

Michael J. Keegan
Coalition for a Nuclear Free Great Lakes,
MI

Russell J. Lowes, Research Director
Power Plant Analysts

Alice Hirt
Don't Waste Michigan, MI