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## **Local and National Groups Refute Claims that More Nuclear Power Would Benefit Mississippi**

### ***New Reactor Means More Risks, More Cost and Ignores Impact of Ongoing State Sponsored Discrimination on Public Health, Safety and Security***

JACKSON, Miss.—The construction of additional nuclear reactors in western Mississippi would endanger the community and the region by leaving emergency personnel ill-equipped to deal with accidents or terrorist attacks, local and national environmental groups stated today. Furthermore, such a proposal ignores the adverse impact of a discriminatory state tax law which even federal regulators admit could financially burden local residents, most of whom are minority and low-income persons. The community may not be able to afford the additional costs of heightened security and emergency preparedness for more nuclear power plants, the groups said.

The five local and national groups, speaking at a press conference in the state capitol today, denounced Entergy's proposal to build up to two new reactors at its existing plant site in Port Gibson. A public meeting is to be held tonight in Port Gibson by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to solicit public comments on the draft environmental review prepared by that agency.

The Green Party of Mississippi, Mississippi 2020 Network, Mississippi Sierra Club, Public Citizen, and Nuclear Information and Resource Service stood in front of a 3.5-foot tall ice sculpture of a nuclear plant at the capitol steps symbolizing the risks of a "melt down" from this inherently dangerous technology and growing concern for the real cost and danger to public health, security and the environment from the proposed nuclear site expansion.

"New reactors in Port Gibson will be an economic burden on Claiborne County, and will pose an unacceptable threat to local residents as well as those further away, even here in Jackson," said Landon Huey, the Green Party of Mississippi's point person on nuclear power. "Radiation doesn't stop at the county line."

Several of the groups had intervened before an NRC licensing board using legal contentions to oppose Entergy's Early Site Permit application including a locally supported challenge to a peculiar state tax law passed in 1986 exclusively affecting Mississippi nuclear power sites. The law stripped Claiborne County of 70% of its property tax assessment for the reactor, significantly undermining the county's ability to prepare for a radiological emergency for its largely rural and poor African-American population (84%). While the NRC licensing board dismissed all of the groups' contentions, including environmental justice, the NRC staff wrote in the April 2005 Draft Environmental Impact Statement that "It is not clear whether Claiborne County would receive property taxes, sales, and use taxes, or other taxes and public monies commensurate with the costs of its additional emergency management and public

services obligations. The net financial burden may fall on local residents and taxpayers, most of whom are minority and low-income persons.”

“While Mississippi just took a significant step towards equal justice in the 1964 murders of three civil rights workers in Neshoba County, Claiborne County citizens are still denied economic equality by a discriminatory state tax code that has greatly benefited Entergy,” said Paul Gunter, Director of the Reactor Watchdog Project for Washington, DC-based Nuclear Information and Resource Service. “Moreover, NRC’s blatant promotion of nuclear power has denied county residents a federal hearing on how this continued policy of discrimination affects the health, safety and security of the largely African-American community living in the shadow of Grand Gulf and a new reactor,” he said.

Concerns for the environment and economics of energy production continue to focus on the many threats posed by exorbitantly expensive nuclear power construction, operation and maintenance, and clean up. While much attention has recently focused on nuclear power as a generation source for anticipated growth in electricity demands without further exacerbating the problems of climate change, nuclear power continues to be one of the most expensive ways to boil water to generate electricity and simply trades carbon emissions for the production of high-level radioactive waste without any scientifically proven and accepted environmental management plan.

“The focus on nuclear power undermines rather than advances efforts to combat global warming,” said Wenonah Hauter, director of Public Citizen’s energy program. “Every dollar spent on nuclear power could go much further and faster towards alleviating this crisis if it were instead directed to more cost-effective solutions like energy efficiency and renewable energy sources like wind.”

Over 300 environmental and public interest organizations have endorsed a letter sent to Congress rejecting nuclear power as a solution to climate change, citing cost, safety, security, proliferation, and nuclear waste as reasons the technology remains unfeasible.

“Twenty years ago, Mississippi rejected the prospect of becoming the nation’s nuclear waste dumping ground at the Richton salt dome. New reactors will create more waste, and Richton could once again be eyed as a potential high-level nuclear waste repository,” said Bob Kochtitzky, director of the Mississippi 2020 Network. “We reject any plans, including new reactors at Grand Gulf, that could cause Mississippi to become a nuclear hotspot.”