Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty Progresses

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which opened for signatures in New York on Sept. 20, 2017, is winning increasing support from nations around the world. Malta became the 84th state to sign on Aug 25, 2020.

Ireland, Nigeria, Niazu, and Saint Kitts & Nevis ratiﬁed the treaty in August, honoring the 75th anniversaries of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The number of treaty ratifications is now 44, just six short of the 50 required for it to enter into force as international law.

The process comes in spite of the effect that Covid-19 restrictions have on campaigning for the Ban Treaty.

On July 15, the African Commission on Nuclear Energy marked the 11th anniversary of the Treaty of Pelamon, establishing Africa as a nuclear-weapon-free zone. The commission called on all African states to ratify the TPNW, while also noting the anniversaries of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. “Bringing into force the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons would be a most ﬁtting tribute to the victims and survivors of the atomic bombings.”

In Minnesota, a petition calling for support of the Treaty now has 23,000 signatures. Although face-to-face meetings with the state’s congressional delegation are postponed due to pandemic rules, the End War Committee of Women Against Military Madness and the Minnesota-St. Paul chapter of Veterans for Peace have organized over 100 people who are calling the state’s US Senators monthly, urging their support of the Treaty. Please join this effort if you live in Mm., or start the ball rolling in your own state. —CM

Huge Cost Overruns May Defeat Small Reactor Prototype as Investors Flee

With projected costs leaping from a 2017 estimate of $3.6 billion, to $4.2 billion in Nov. 2019, and reaching $6.1 billion just last July, municipal investment in a Utah effort to build the nation’s ﬁrst so-called small modular reactors (SMRs) is starting to dry up.

To date, Logan, Utah and Lehi City have quit the project, and Bountiful, Utah’s power department says the chances are greater than 50-50 that it too will withdraw.

“If we can’t bring this price up at a competitive price we just won’t build this project,” said LaVarr Webb, a spokesperson for the Utah Associated Municipal Power Systems (UAMPS), Reuters reported. UAMPS is the Utah state agency that delivers electricity to member cities in six western states. Webb told the Washington Examiner he expected other members could decide to leave too.

The experimental reactor venture is being built at the Idaho National Laboratory. UAMPS is partnered with dozens of regional cities and companies including Nucale, Fluor, and Worldwide Construction, and the US Dept. of Energy. The plan is to build the ﬁrst of 12 small modular reactors by 2029. Cities including Brigham City, Logan, and Lehi joined in the effort to subsidize some of the development costs for the ﬁrst SMR, which is being engineered to produce 60 megawatts.

A major ﬁnancial shock was the Energy Department renege on its proﬂite to provide $1.4 billion for the ﬁrst reactor, the Cache Valley Daily reported. Then in early August, the Utah Taxpayer’s Association issued a scathing report urging all the municipalities to quit the project citing cost overruns, construction delays, and “dependence on unpredictable federal subsidies.”

Edwin Lyman, the Union of Concerned Scientists’ Director of Nuclear Power Safety, quoted, “the only hope for the UAMPS project, or any other of these ﬁrst-of-a-kind projects, is that the Department of Energy will end up ﬁnancing it.” —IL

Renevables Oustside Nucelar; Reactor Futures Slammed by Investors’ S&P 500

As renewable energy sources become more cost effective, nuclear power is being seen as a losing investment. In its November 2019 report “The Energy Transition: Nuclear Dead and Alive” S&P Global Ratings stated, “Renewables are signiﬁcantly cheaper and offer quicker payback on scalable investments at a time when power demand is stagnating.” Indeed, current international investment trends favor renewables, largely because nuclear power is not considered “clean.” Building nuclear reactors is hugely expensive due to increasing construction costs, and the complexity of meeting safety requirements imposed after Fukushima. Signiﬁcantly, the S&P report even tells investors that nuclear power would not exist without “massive government support.”

S&P also advises against investing in small modular reactors (SMRs), which may eventually be permitted, but which can’t be developed without government funding. Although SMRs are considere- d a low initial investment, the reactors’ safety can’t be assured, long-level radioactive waste leaves the same disastrous legacy, while renewables are far less expensive and quicker to bring online. —CM

Will Radioactive Fracking Wastewater Get in Your Veggies? Some States Say “Maybe”

By Elena Hight

As temperatures continue to rise across the globe, states like New Mexico and California are facing increasing strains on already stretched water supplies. Looking for new ways to meet water needs, some states have started researching other uses for the millions of gallons of wastewater generated by hydraulic fracturing.

Every year, the US oil and gas industry produces about 772 million gallons of this wastewater, which the indus- try calls “produced water.” Depending on the geological formations surrounding the fracking site, some of this wastewater contains signiﬁcant levels of radioactive materials and other toxic metals, including lead, uranium, and radium among others. This toxic wastewater is then pumped back into the ground via “disposal” or “injection” wells, or placed in

On the Bright Side

Bribery Scandals Prove Nuclear Industry Must Cheat to Beat Safe Renewables


In Ohio, Republican House Speaker Larry Householder has been arrested, along with his chief of staff and three lobbyists. They were charged as co-conspirators in a [$60 million] bribery and racketeering scheme involving the passage of a controvers- ial nuclear bailout. In Illinois, House Speaker and state Democratic Party Chair Michael Madigan is under investigation, while the state’s largest utility company, Commonwealth Edison (ComEd, a sub- sidary of Exelon) is cooperating under a deferred prosecution agreement and paying $200 million in ﬁnes. The investigation includes ComEd’s maneu- verings to attain a nuclear bailout....

Mr. Householder and his co-accused funneled dark money to statehouse candidates, all but one of whom voted for the bailout after getting into ofﬁce. Then they competed to build a bullet measure seeking the rebates for the bailout.

In Illinois, ComEd admitted that it provided $1.3 million in payments to associates of Speaker Madi- gan from 2011 through 2019. ComEd admitted that the payments were to curry favor with Madigan over matters important to the utility, including the nuclear bailout.

The $200-million slap-on-the-wrist that ComEd is paying in ﬁnes is less than one year’s worth of the $2.4 billion bailout it secured from the Illinois legislature....

[The] Illinois and Ohio subsidies are among the smaller ones: $7.6 billion for Exelon in New York; up to $3 billion for Exelon and PSEG in New Jersey; and a proposal for up $500 million per year for Exelon and FirstEnergy in Pennsylvania ... have power companies done the same in other states, where even larger subsidies are on the table?....

Agging, uncompetitive nuclear reactors cannot keep up with the technological leaps and bounds and plummeting costs of renewable energy....

It’s time for lawmakers to repeal the nuclear bailouts and let the people of their states choose their energy future in an atmosphere of free competition. If public opinion is any guide, they will always choose clean, renewable energy over dirty nuclear.

See full article: https://augustafreepress. com/corruption-scandals-expose-nuclear-indus- try-for-what-it-is/