

# On the Bright Side

## Illinois Governor Vetoes Dangerous Nuclear Moratorium Repeal Bill

On August 11, Illinois' Democratic Governor J.B. Pritzker vetoed a bill to repeal the state's 1987 nuclear construction moratorium. The law was introduced partly as a promotion of so-called "next-generation" nuclear reactors. "Had it passed, this bill would not only have removed all prohibitions for generating even more high-level radioactive wastes with no disposal method in place (Illinois currently 'hosts' roughly 11,000 tons of orphaned waste reactor fuel), it would have opened the door to more nuclear reactors, which could have had devastating effects on the renewable energy goals championed in the 2021 Climate and Equity Jobs Act," said David Kraft, Director of the Chicago-based Nuclear Energy Information Service.

According to sources from the governor's office, "The bill is vetoed because the vague definitions in the bill will open the door to the proliferation of large-scale nuclear reactors that are so costly to build that they will cause exorbitant ratepayer-funded bailouts. Additionally, it provides no regulatory protections or updates to address the health and safety of Illinois residents who would live and work around these new reactors." — NEIS press release, & CapitolFax.com, Aug. 11, 2023

## New Grand Canyon National Monument May Protect Sacred Lands

On August 8, President Biden designated the Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni — Ancestral Footprints of the Grand Canyon National Monument in northern Arizona. The national monument protects 917,000 acres of public Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service land, sacred to indigenous peoples and tribal nations, that borders Grand Canyon National Park.

Though the designation prohibits new mining projects in the area, it allows currently permitted mining operations to continue. Energy Fuels, Inc. told Native News Online it plans to move forward with uranium mining at the existing Pinyon Plain Mine, six miles from Grand Canyon National Park. Pinyon Plain is one of two idled uranium mines located right above Hack Canyon, that drains into the Colorado River, drinking water for 40 million people.

Thousands of abandoned uranium mines, most of which operated without proper worker and environmental safety precautions and whose tailings piles still poison land and water, have heavily affected nearby Navajo and Havasupai tribes. "Many of us have worked for decades to safeguard our homelands from desecration at the hands of extractive, harmful operations like uranium mining, and today we see these lands permanently protected," Grand Canyon Tribal Coalition coordinator Carletta Tilousi said in a statement.

— CNN Aug. 8; *High Country News*, Aug. 11; *Navajo-Hopi Observer*, Sept. 5, 2023

## Federal Appeals Court Strikes Down NRC License for Parking Lot Dump

The Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled August 25, that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) does not have authority to license temporary storage facilities for irradiated nuclear fuel away from a reactor.

The court wrote: "Nuclear power generation produces thousands of metric tons of nuclear waste each year. ... Congress has mandated that such waste be permanently stored in a geologic repository. But the development, licensing, and construction of that repository has stalled."

The NRC issued a license to Interim Storage Partners, LLC for the construction and operation of a consolidated interim storage facility (CISF) for waste nuclear fuel on the Permian Basin in Andrews County, Texas. Oil and gas extraction company Fasken Land and Minerals, Ltd., along with the Permian Basin Land and Royalty Owners and the state of Texas, filed the appeal. The now-vacated

license, issued in 2021, authorized storage of 5,000 tons of waste reactor fuel for 40 years, with a planned expansion up to 40,000 tons over 20 years. In 2022, Texas lawmakers passed a bill blocking any new storage facilities for such high-level radioactive waste.

The Tenth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals is currently considering a challenge to the 40-year license the NRC issued in May to Holtec International to build and operate a CISF for 500 canisters, or 8,680 tons of waste fuel near Carlsbad, New Mexico, with an anticipated increase up to 10,000 canisters over the next 20 years. — World Nuclear News, Aug. 30; Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals Ruling No. 21-60743, Aug. 25, 2023

## Two Holtec Radioactive Waste Dumps Thwarted

Two recent efforts to dump liquid radioactive waste from decommissioned nuclear power reactors into adjacent waters have been stopped. On July 24, the shuttered Pilgrim Nuclear near Plymouth, Massachusetts — a General Electric Mark I reactor like the Fukushima meltdowns — was prohibited from discharging water into Cape Cod Bay under the state's Ocean Sanctuaries Act. The act prohibits the "dumping or discharge of commercial, municipal, domestic, or industrial waste" into protected areas. For years, local activists, environmentalists, the fishing community, State Senator Susan Moran, and others have worked to halt owner Holtec International's planned dumping of some 1.1 million gallons of radioactively contaminated water.

Likewise, Indian Point station, a three-reactor complex near Buchanan, New York, was also prevented from dumping an estimated one million gallons of radioactive water into the Hudson River when a state prohibition was signed into law by Governor Kathy Hochul on August 18. Holtec, which also owns Indian Point, continues to assert that the release of water would not be harmful to public health. For now, the bill requires the wastewater to remain stored at the 240-acre site in Buchanan. — WBUR, Mass. Pub. Radio, July 24; *Patriot Ledger*, July 25; Gov. Hochul press release, ny.gov; and *Journal News*, lohud.com; Aug. 18, 2023

## Medical Journals Call for Disarmament

Over 100 medical journals, including the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, published a joint statement on August 1, warning of the ongoing threat nuclear weapons pose to human and environmental health and safety, and calling for urgent action to abolish nuclear weapons. The joint statement warns that ongoing modernization of nuclear arsenals needlessly heightens the risk of nuclear attacks "by design, error, or miscalculation," risks that are created by nuclear weapons readiness or "deterrence."

The letter, "Reducing the risks of nuclear war," declares: "Any use of nuclear weapons would be catastrophic for humanity. Even a 'limited' nuclear war involving only 250 of the 13,000 nuclear weapons in the world could kill 120 million people outright and cause global climate disruption leading to a nuclear famine, putting two billion people at risk. A nuclear war between the U.S. and Russia could kill 200 million people and cause a global 'nuclear winter' that could kill five to six billion people."

The warning was drafted by editors from 11 journals together with the World Association of Medical Editors and leaders of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, which launched the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons in 2007 and helped produce the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). It disparages current arms control efforts, calling on nuclear-armed states to immediately adopt a no-first-use policy, take nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert, pledge not to use nuclear weapons in current conflicts, and negotiate the verifiable and time-bound elimination of nuclear arsenals in preparation to adopting the TPNW.

— *The British Medical Journal*, Aug. 1; and Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Aug. 7, 2023

## Democracy Now! Interviews Nukewatch

Democracy Now! put Nukewatch on the air for the first time on August 10, tying together protest stories from the Netherlands and Germany, with host Amy Goodman announcing: "Ten peace activists were arrested on the runway of [a Dutch] air base in the Netherlands, where 15 U.S. nuclear bombs are stockpiled for NATO's so-called 'nuclear sharing' program. The action came on the 78th anniversary of the U.S. atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We'll speak with John LaForge, co-director of Nukewatch, who just served a 50-day sentence in Germany for protesting U.S. nuclear weapons stationed at an air base there." In a prompt for the report, LaForge said, "We take the Pentagon's threatened use of nuclear weapons, known as 'deterrence,' very seriously, because, under law, this ongoing, credible, and well-rehearsed readiness to attack people with hydrogen bombs is an interna-



tional criminal conspiracy to commit massacres using radiation and firestorms."

Goodman interviewed Susan Crane, the Plowshares activist and Catholic Worker from California, and then asked LaForge to explain the protests.

He said in part, "We argued in trial that the stationing or the transfer of U.S. nuclear weapons to Germany is an unlawful act, a violation of Articles I and II of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. ... We argued the case that nuclear weapons, their components and their delivery systems, in Germany and everywhere, are principally just instruments of international criminal activity, repudiated and prohibited, by international law, including and especially the Nuremberg Charter, the Nuremberg judgment and the Nuremberg principles."

— Democracy Now! online at: [https://www.democracynow.org/2023/8/10/nuclear\\_protests\\_netherlands](https://www.democracynow.org/2023/8/10/nuclear_protests_netherlands)



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