Nuclear Power is Now Trump Power…What Could Go Wrong?

By Harvey Wasserman and Karl Grossman

Donald Trump is now the ultimate face of the U.S. nuclear power industry. What could go wrong?

If you are advocating atomic energy in any form, you are promoting The Donald's latest and largest fiscal fleecing of the American people. It mirrors his mega swindles in crypto and so much more — except this time with apocalyptic impact.

It's a hyper-push for nuclear power. As *The New York Times* this week headlined the "Climate Forward" column of Claire Brown: "Trump's plans for nuclear power lurch ahead."

Her July 7th piece began: "President Trump wants to quadruple nuclear power production in the United States by 2050. To get there, developers would need to build about a hundred times as much nuclear capacity in the next 25 years as they did in the past 25. In recent weeks, a series of government announcements have nudged the country a bit closer to that goal."

It continued: "Nuclear power has broad bipartisan support in Congress, and many climate experts have embraced it as a low-emissions source of energy. Other experts remain opposed, arguing that it is too expensive or that the safety risks are too high."

Through its Truth Social front, the Trump Family has bought a major interest in TAE Technologies, a $6 billion California-based plunge into nuclear fusion.

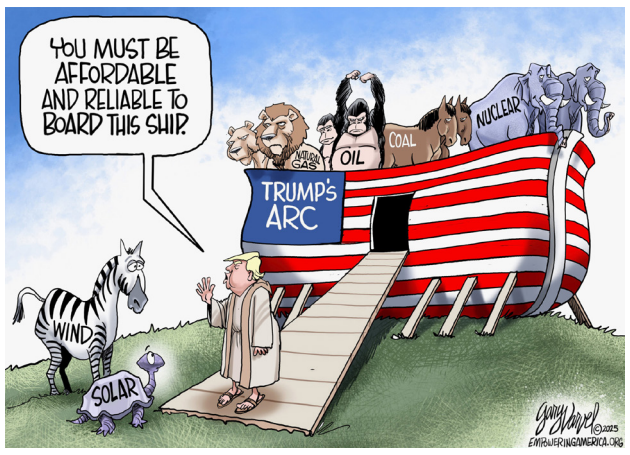
To serve that investment, Trump is scamming his presidency to funnel billions of public dollars into a "Peaceful Atom" from which he expects to personally profit. Right now, he's pushing through Congress a $17.5 billion interest-free slush fund to promote more U.S. reactor construction.

Similar handouts from George W. Bush and Barack Obama fed two new nuclear power reactors in Georgia. Originally promised at around $15 billion, they fired up last year seven years late and nearly $25 billion over budget. Their most recently reported price tag approaches $40 billion. Their output will never compete with renewables. They'll bleed Peach State mega-cash as long as they operate.

Two abandoned nuclear reactors in South Carolina blew $9 billion outright. The double debacle bankrupted Westinghouse, once the world's leading reactor producer.

Meanwhile Trump pushes so-called Small Modular Reactors, hyped to power data centers that produce his beloved crypto. Projected to operate around 2030, SMR cultists hope their juice might (at best) cost a mere three times the proven cost of solar panels, and four or more times that of currently operating onshore wind turbines.

But despite Trump's frantic efforts to kill it, the real-world transition to green "Solartopian" renewables may be underway. Epic advances in battery technology essentially eliminate any need for the base-line power nuclear produces when they don't break down or blow up. California's battery capacity is now seven times as large as the maximum



Energy Democracy in Trumptopia. Photo: empoweringamerica.org/cartoons/

output that can be produced by the state's last two hyper-expensive Diablo Canyon nuclear reactors.

Those dangerously decrepit reactors are surrounded by at least a dozen earthquake faults. They sit just 45 miles from the San Andreas Fault.

In 2013, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission site inspector Dr. Michael Peck warned that Diablo might not withstand a credible quake from the seismic faults surrounding it. Peck's warning was ignored. Now he is gone from the commission. In the Trump era, no such report could be written in the first place.

In 2018, California adopted a comprehensive plan to shut Diablo Canyon and to phase-in renewables. The transition was hugely accelerated by massive advances that have dropped battery prices while expanding their capabilities. Through at least part of most days now, California gets 100% of its electricity from renewables, much of it coming from solar panels in the Central Valley.

But "green" Governor Gavin Newsom is trashing the transition. In 2022, he handed Diablo's owner, PG&E, billions in Trump-style grift while promoting his own run for the White House. As a result, California's electric rates are now the highest in the continental U.S.

Meanwhile, Trump attacks the green competition with billions of public dollars to buy out leases from wind and solar projects, which threaten to produce electricity far cheaper than his beloved nukes. With the epic spread of cheap batteries (which are also fueling a global boom in electric vehicles) more than 80% of the world's newly installed electric generating capacity now comes from renewables. All of Trump's mob-style assaults in the U.S. are being challenged in court and by the grassroots. But the global market push remains unrelenting.

Despite the growing danger as they deteriorate from age and maladministration, atomic reactors have been federally shielded from accident insurance requirements since 1957. Amidst escalating safety concerns, Congress has extended the liability exemption to SMRs, meant to power thousands of the crypto-loving data centers now being vehemently opposed by grassroots citizens throughout the U.S.

Last year Trump became the first U.S. president to fire a chair of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. The U.S. Supreme Court has now confirmed the royal prerogative of a sitting president to fire any regulatory official. In the wake of Musk's DOGE purge of at least 100 technical experts at the NRC, Trump is now sole arbiter of health and safety regulations, which are now in terrifying free fall at the 94 licensed U.S. nuclear reactors.

Trump also wants to put new reactors on military reservations, shredding residual NRC restraints through the even looser Department of Energy regulations.

Two operating reactors at North Anna in Virginia, and one in Perry in Ohio have already been significantly damaged by earthquakes (Perry twice). With neither accident insurance nor credible safety regulation, Trump/Nukes Inc. is a sitting duck for terror attacks. Russian drones have already damaged reactors and fuel storage sites at Ukraine's Zaporizhia complex and at Chernobyl. Others have been under fire.

Trump has infamously launched outright war on Iran's nuclear weapons production. But as in Ukraine, a single drone could turn any of the world's 400-plus reactors into a radioactive weapon of mass destruction, plunging us into an economic, ecological, and health abyss from which we might never recover.

Meanwhile, an industry that hypes itself as "climate friendly" burns at 500 to 600 degrees Fahrenheit. In France, the U.S., and elsewhere, commercial reactors super-heat lakes and rivers that can no longer cool them, while boiling billions of marine organisms.

Seven decades after the first commercial reactor opened in Pennsylvania, The Donald is the undisputed self-dealing face of the "Peaceful Atom."

He's its top investor. He rules the shell of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. He's the presidential purveyor of taxpayer grift, and chief hit man aiming to kill the renewable competition.

— ***Harvey Wasserman wrote*** **Solartopia! Our Green-Powered Earth** ***and co-convenes the Grassroots Emergency Election Protection Coalition at www.electionprotection2024.org. Karl Grossman is the author of*** **Cover Up: What You Are Not Supposed to Know About Nuclear Power,** ***and*** **Power Crazy.** ***He hosts the TV program Enviro Close-Up with Karl Grossman (www.envirovideo.com) They wrote this piece for Counterpunch.***

Eleven State Attorneys General Oppose Trump's Drastic Overhaul of Nuclear Power Regulation

From the office of Maryland Attorney General Anthony G. Brown

A coalition of 11 state attorneys general took action at the end of August to oppose two U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) proposals, which are part of a dangerous wholesale revision of its long-standing regulations. In comments submitted to the NRC, the attorneys general argue that the monumental changes the NRC has proposed threaten to put public health and safety at risk.

The AG coalition joined thousands of angry citizens who wrote to the NRC condemning the proposed deregulation.

The coalition filed comments opposing two proposed NRC rule changes. The first includes sweeping changes to radiation exposure standards and oversight with serious impacts on state programs and worker and public safety. The proposal would increase levels of radiation — from power reactors, radioactive waste canisters and dump sites, medical devices and treatments, uranium mining and fuel fabrication facilities, etc. — to which workers and the public could legally be exposed, and would reduce monitoring and reporting requirements. The NRC's proposal would also eliminate the science-backed "As Low As Reasonably Achievable" standard for allowable radioactive pollution. The NRC has not provided a scientific basis for abandoning this internationally recognized, long-standing protection, the group said.

In their August 31 comment letter, the attorneys general argue that the NRC failed to support its proposals with evidence, failed to propose or consider alternative approaches to achieve its stated goals, and failed to allow the public or the states adequate time to comprehend and meaningfully review the unprecedented volume of proposed regulatory changes the NRC has introduced this year.

The coalition also submitted comments opposing a second NRC proposal that could allow large parts of nuclear power reactors to be built without environmental review or community engagement in the decision-making process.

The attorneys general argue that several other provisions in the proposed rule create unwarranted risks to public safety and amount to the NRC abdicating its oversight role and safety mandate.

The coalition notes that the proposed changes have the potential to negatively impact communities with preexisting environmental justice concerns. The attorneys general assert that, if finalized, the proposed rule would violate the Administrative Procedure Act and fail to comply with the Atomic Energy Act and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Last month, a coalition of attorneys general jointly submitted a comment letter opposing the NRC's proposal to revise its NEPA regulations. That proposal would unlawfully fast-track nuclear reactor construction by ignoring foreseeable environmental impacts and limiting public participation. The attorneys general argued that, if finalized, the proposed rule would also violate the Administrative Procedure Act and fail to comply with NEPA.

Submitting the August 31 comment letters were the attorneys general of Maryland, California, Colorado, Delaware, Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Mexico, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington.