

1. REGARDING SUPPORT FOR BIPARTISAN EFFORTS IN CONGRESS TO ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT OF ADVANCED NUCLEAR POWER REACTORS

BACKGROUND

The South is home to the nation's first new commercial nuclear construction projects in more than 20 years, which are key components of the region's electric reliability and environmental plans going forward. Expected retirements of nuclear and other generating assets, along with the certainty of increasing electricity demand both region-wide and throughout the world, underscore the need for the continued evolution of energy-production technologies, including innovative nuclear reactors for various applications. A number of foreign firms and governments already are devoting considerable intellectual and financial resources toward development of innovative reactor technology to serve – with the goal of dominating – emerging markets.

Evolving U.S. reactor designs ranging from additional large, light water reactors (similar to those now being built in Tennessee, Georgia and South Carolina) and small, modular light water reactors to non-light water reactors can come to market over the next 25 years with the right government policies and a modernized, more responsive safety-focused regulatory framework.

In recognition of the need for the United States to remain at the forefront of worldwide nuclear technological innovation, bipartisan sponsors in both chambers of the U.S. Congress are pushing for legislation to achieve a number of key objectives, each important to America's nuclear future. Desired legislative objectives include: a staged, risk-informed, predictable Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) licensing process that reassures investors in first-of-a-kind projects; a new requirement that the NRC clarify plans for licensing research and test reactors; completion of an NRC rulemaking to establish a technology-inclusive regulatory framework; coordination of technical expertise and modeling between the NRC and the Department of Energy (DOE); and an Advanced Nuclear Energy Cost-share Grant Program under which the DOE secretary shall provide assistance covering a portion of innovative technology design applicants' NRC licensing fees. These proposals all contemplate accelerated progress on the NRC's own right-sizing reforms under Project Aim in order to redirect agency resources to higher safety priorities and remove impediments to deployment of innovative nuclear technologies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Southern Legislative Conference of The Council of State Governments endorses an “all-of-the-above” nuclear future for the United States that thrives under a responsive, efficient regulatory framework and allows for the timely, cost-effective development of a host of promising innovative reactor technologies that set a world standard for safety and reliability.

Toward those ends, the Southern Legislative Conference of The Council of State Governments encourages ongoing bipartisan effort to enact legislation to reform the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and speed research, development, and deployment of innovative reactor technologies.

The Southern Legislative Conference of The Council of State Governments requests that a copy of this policy position be forwarded to the Southern Congressional delegation; president of the United States; chairs and ranking members of the U.S. Senate Committees on Environment & Public Works and Energy & Natural Resources; chairs and ranking members of the U.S. House of Representatives Committees on Energy & Commerce and Science, Space & Technology; secretary of the U.S. Department of Energy; and the chair of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission.