

Anne Burt
Edgecomb
LD 342

Distinguished chairs and members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee:

My name is Anne D. (Andy) Burt. I live in Edgecomb, about two miles as the crow flies from the decommissioned Maine Yankee Atomic Power Plant (MY) and its stored nuclear rods and fuel waste. I am writing in opposition to three bills you are considering: LD 342 “An Act to Include Nuclear Power in the State's Renewable Portfolio Standard”; LD 343 “An Act to Direct the Public Utilities Commission to Seek Informational Bids Regarding Small Modular Nuclear Reactors in the State”; and LD 601: “An Act to Remove State-imposed Referendum Requirements Regarding Nuclear Power.”

While I live close to the buried toxic remains of the decommissioned MY, we have never used a single electron produced by the plant. When we moved back to Maine in 1989, we installed a temporary small array of solar panels and used discarded marine batteries to live off-grid and have electric lights as we built up our house from basement living. We lived off-grid until after MY ceased commercial operation in December 1996 “due to safety and environmental concerns” announced by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.. Today we have full solar and back-up, deep cycle battery arrays and have connected to the grid. (In full disclosure to the committee, I was part of a local ,volunteer-driven citizens’ group —Friends of the Coast Opposing Nuclear Pollution — that was instrumental in documenting the thousands of unfixed problems at MY and brought back to the community the whistleblower electrical systems expert who shared the dangers of original wiring in the plant and put the nail in the coffin for the plant’s operation. A courageous reporter and editor told the story on the front page of the local newspaper and that moved efforts forward towards decommissioning MY that was concluded in 2005.)

Since 2000, I have been creating and leading educational programs in collaboration with environmental and faith leaders on the science and solutions to accelerating climate change. In 2016 and 2019, with a professional videographer, I created two films about Maine climate justice activists and Maine climate solutions already in place. So I understand we must move quickly if we are to reduce greenhouse gases, but i am certain, from reports I’ve read by nuclear energy researchers and others, that nuclear energy, as it is now produced and the waste it generates, is not the path to take. We have many more available and far less polluting solutions ready for implementation if we have the will to employ them. It will take a combination of complex solutions and governments, corporations, businesses, towns, and individuals working together at all levels to move us to fossil fuel-free living required to sustain life on Earth. Sadly, we have already wasted too much time since we’ve known about the existential problem.

To quickly and efficiently address climate change, small modular nuclear plants sound like a dream solution...just plop one down and you’ve got up to 350mW of generation for a community, industry, whatever. Industry analysts even suggest that these nuclear designs will be cheaper and produce less radioactive waste than conventional nuclear plants like MY. However, recent research studies from Stanford University and the University of British Columbia have found these small modular nuclear reactors produce more complex radioactive waste and safe waste disposal expenses are projected to be much higher. And currently, there is no nuclear waste repository, such as the one proposed years ago at Yucca Mountain, and so my neighbors and I live with nuclear waste at our doorstep that has a radioactive life of millennia (not a gift to our descendants), With the possibility of moving forward should tthese bills pass, we might face more nuclear waste in our neighborhood.

I believe the PUC, legislators, and citizens should be alert to promising new developments and discoveries in the renewable energy field, even nuclear energy, that

do not bring further harm to our planet than climate change is doing. Nuclear fusion has long been talked about as a source of unlimited energy with little to no toxic waste or emissions. There are glimmers of hope that researchers will have a breakthrough in that energy field in the future. In this respect, I would support LD 343 if it were written solely for PUC to study and report back to this committee on emerging clean energy technologies that would not add to the toxic waste stream.

For LD 601, I believe that it is important for Maine citizens to have a say in whether we would allow nuclear energy plants of any size to be sited or nuclear waste to be disposed of in our state. The long-term risks are substantial and its important for citizens to have the referendum power for their voices to be heard.

I urge you to vote OUGHT NOT TO PASS on LD 342, LD 343, and LD 601.

Thank you for your service to Maine.