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Monday August 25, 2008

Pete P. Gallego
STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Letters to the Editor

Response to Fran

Response to Fran Sage's column: Before you decide to contact U.S. Rep. Ciro Rodriquez to urge him to oppose nuclear energy, I suggest you do a little research. First, all energy sources receive some sort of subsidy. When compared to wind, solar and coal, nuclear energy is the least subsidized energy source in the United States. The assertion that nuclear energy is the most subsidized is simply untrue. The Price Anderson Act is sometimes called a subsidy because it limits the liability of the nuclear energy industry in the unlikely event of an accident.

Federal loan guarantees are widely used by the federal government to support the financing of projects that have substantial public value and would not otherwise be able to secure financing on reasonable terms in the private market. Title XVII of the 2005 Energy Policy Act authorizes the Secretary of Energy to provide guarantees for up to 80 percent of project costs for projects that avoid, reduce or sequester air pollutants or greenhouse gases, and employ new or significantly improved technologies.

Second, nuclear energy IS clean. It's a key tool in reducing greenhouse gases. Nuclear power plants generate electricity for one in five homes and businesses in the United States without producing or emitting greenhouse gases. The volume of greenhouse gas emissions prevented at the nation's 104 nuclear units is equivalent to taking 96 percent of all passenger cars off America's highways for one year.

Third, regarding waste, the nuclear energy industry is the only one established since the Industrial Revolution that has managed and accounted for its hazardous materials, including used nuclear fuel. Through the nuclear fuel cycle, the relatively small volumes of nuclear byproducts created are carefully contained, packaged and safely stored on-site.

In the four decades since companies began producing electricity with nuclear energy in the United States, the nuclear industry has produced about 40,000 metric tons of used nuclear fuel. That's simply not much volume when compared to other electricity generation sources: It would cover an area only the size of a football field to a depth of about 15 feet. The fuel is being stored in large steel-lined pools with thick concrete walls, and, as necessary, in steel-lined casks, with thick, strong concrete walls. These storage methods are equally protective of public health and safety.

Tom Forbes, President

Nuclear Energy for Texans

Austin

Nuclear Energy for Texans

Austin

Editor's Note: Initial funding for the Nuclear Energy for Texans organization comes from Exelon Nuclear, the largest nuclear operator in the United States.