



Secretary Jennifer Granholm
Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20585

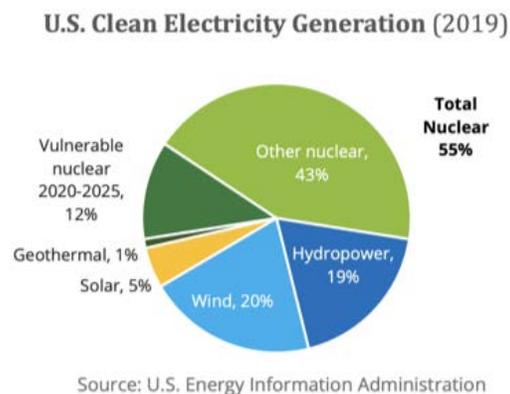
April 15, 2021

Dear Secretary Granholm,

Congratulations on your appointment as Secretary of Energy. Given the challenge of addressing climate change, yours is one of the most important jobs in the world! We are writing to you as a coalition of academics, entrepreneurs, environmentalists, investors, engineers, workers and concerned citizens who care deeply about addressing climate with data and evidence-based policies. We have come together to seek your assistance in preventing a clean energy disaster: the imminent and premature shutdown of a large number of America's nuclear power plants, which collectively provide 55% of the nation's carbon-free electricity.

We need immediate action to prevent the irreversible loss of at-risk nuclear power assets, most imminent of which is Indian Point in New York due to be shuttered at the end of this month. Accordingly, we write to urge you to get the Biden Administration put a halt to these senseless closures by using Biden's national emergency power to declare a moratorium on such closures, to give the Congress time to act to more properly value the clean energy generation they provide.

The Biden Administration is committed to addressing climate change by transitioning the U.S. to 100% clean energy. Yet, as much as 12% of our nation's existing carbon-free energy is at risk of irreversible removal and destruction right now. This would be an enormous and tragic waste of critical clean energy assets, for no good reason other than that there is no price on carbon that allows nuclear to compete given current policies in deregulated markets.



Shutting nuclear power results in instant increases in gas combustion, air pollution and CO₂ emissions—and these closures will increase carbon emissions by over 130 million tonnes, enough to counteract the benefits of half of all the wind turbines and solar panels deployed across the U.S.

The [Protect Nuclear Now](#) campaign is a project of the [Climate Coalition](#), a coalition of environmental, energy and scientific organizations and individuals striving to free environmental thinking from the tyranny of EITHER-OR and instead show the global benefits of the harmony of AND, when it comes to clean energy.



These senseless, premature retirements and the threat that we move in the wrong direction on carbon emissions is what makes this a true emergency. Following the very serious grid failure experienced in Texas, we saw the clear importance of nuclear generation to grid resiliency and reliability in the face of weather-related disruptions. Lives were lost as a result of that power outage, so a group of us came together to organize to protect nuclear power, so that future lives are not lost because of failed energy policies that do not value the resilience of nuclear power.

The root cause of premature closures was described by Daniel Poneman, a previous Deputy Secretary of the Department of Energy:¹

“The problem is that the rules governing wholesale electricity markets do not allow the unique advantages of nuclear power to be reflected in the wholesale price, effectively putting new and existing nuclear plants at a disadvantage. These rules were written decades ago to deliver some things we want (low prices and excess capacity to meet spikes in demand) but not other things we want (*clean air, lower carbon emissions and grid reliability*). (Emphasis added both here and below.)

Republicans and Democrats in states like Illinois, New York and New Jersey have taken action to establish “zero-emission credits” so the markets better reflect the value of carbon-free energy like nuclear and renewables. *But state solutions are an imperfect substitute for what should be federal, nationwide action to reform these markets.*”

Which is why we need an emergency declaration to provide time for the Congress to act. Fortunately, there has already been legislation proposed targeting these problems. [Senate Bill S.4897, the American Nuclear Infrastructure Act of 2020](#) and [House Bill H.R. 9015, Preserving Existing Nuclear Energy Generation Act](#) show that both houses of Congress recognize there are serious problems and a need to protect existing nuclear assets. [House Bill H.R. 2307](#), introduced on April 1, 2021 with 35 co-sponsors, provides a plan to put a price on carbon to improve market efficiencies around the use and deployment of clean energy technologies.

Communities around our nation’s nuclear plants cannot afford to lose their high-paying union jobs, tax revenue, and economic vitality for bad reasons. Indian Point Energy Center, New York’s largest electricity source in 2019, employed 1,000 workers with an annual payroll totaling \$140 million. Diablo Canyon in California and Dresden and Byron in Illinois, also at-risk plants, have 1300, 800 and 830 jobs respectively. Thriving communities are in dire jeopardy because nuclear power’s clean electricity is not being properly valued, particularly in deregulated markets.

An emergency moratorium to keep existing U.S. nuclear plants running is the easiest, cheapest, and most immediate action the Biden Administration can take to protect both the global climate and local communities. America’s nuclear plants are among the best in the world and there is no technical reason they cannot operate for decades to come. The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which is already working to ensure that all nuclear power plants operate safely,

¹ Scientific American, [We Can’t Solve Climate Change Without Nuclear Power](#), by Daniel B. Poneman, May 24, 2019.



has approved the continued operations of these plants and is now considering life extensions out to 80 years. With good maintenance, our nuclear plants can continue to operate for decades more, providing us the reliable carbon-free energy we desperately need.

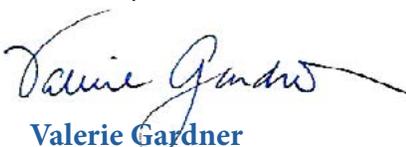
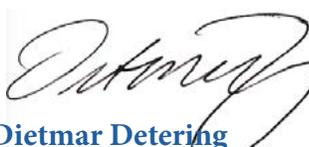
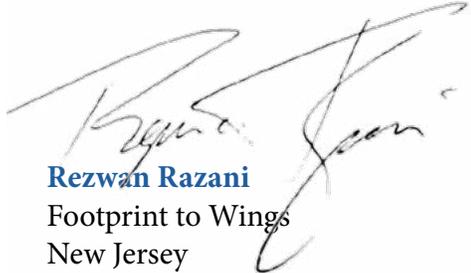
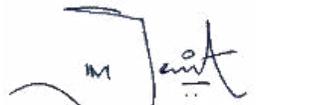
The Consensus Report, “**Accelerating Decarbonization of the U.S. Energy System**,” prepared by the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, advises preserving existing nuclear plants wherever possible.² By declaring an immediate moratorium on premature plant closures, President Biden and his National Climate Task Force can prove they listen to scientists, protect the at-risk plants, and give Congress time to evaluate and pass legislation addressing the root causes of nuclear closures without risking the loss of these valuable clean energy assets.

We implore you to encourage President Biden to take immediate action to effect the moratorium against premature plant closures. Should you need more time, we believe that you, as the Secretary of Energy, have the ability to annul the politically-motivated closure agreements for Indian Point, slated to happen in just two weeks. This then affords you more time to study the idea of an emergency moratorium, before the next plants are due to be shuttered. We have attached a table at the end of this letter showing the at-risk plants and known dates for their planned closure.

Stopping the premature closure of Indian Point, which has been approved by the NRC to operate through to 2025, would prevent downstate New Yorkers from losing nearly all of their clean energy and being forced into total dependency on natural gas. This act alone will save 81% of the carbon-free energy serving all of Manhattan and parts of Westchester County but in total there are 20 reactors and over 170 terawatt hours of clean generation at risk. We are putting our trust in you and President Biden to work together to stop these senseless, unnecessary closures.

We thank you in advance for your attention to this urgent climate and clean energy matter.

Sincerely,

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|  |  |  |
| Valerie Gardner Climate Coalition California | Dietmar Detering Nuclear New York New York | Rezwan Razani Footprint to Wings New Jersey |
|  |  |  |
| Gary Kahanak Climate Coalition Arkansas | Isuru Seneviratne Nuclear New York New York | Eric Meyer Generation Atomic Minnesota |

Signed as organizers of *Protect Nuclear Now*, who are working in collaboration with many other individual members of the following supporting organizations:

² <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/25932/accelerating-decarbonization-of-the-us-energy-system>

Supporting Organizations (Click for a current listing of *Supporting Organizations*.)



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Nuclear Power Plants at Risk of Premature Closure

| Vulnerable Nuclear Plant, State | Generation terawatt-hours per year | Avoided greenhouse gas emissions CO ₂ -eq (GWP ₂₀) | Threat Status |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|--|
| Indian Point 2 & 3, NY | 16.7 | 12.7 | Imminent closure on April 30, 2021 |
| Byron 1 & 2, IL | 20.1 | 15.2 | Planned closure in September 2021 |
| Dresden 2 & 3, IL | 15.1 | 11.4 | Planned closure in November 2021 |
| Diablo Canyon 1 & 2, CA | 16.2 | 12.3 | Scheduled to shut down 2024 & 2025 |
| Davis-Besse, OH | 7.8 | 5.9 | Operating but at risk |
| Palisades, MI | 6.9 | 5.2 | Scheduled to shut down in 2022 |
| Perry, OH | 9.2 | 7.0 | Operating but at risk |
| Beaver Valley 1 & 2, PA | 15.5 | 11.7 | Operating but at risk |
| Salem 1 & 2, NJ | 17.9 | 13.6 | Operating dependent on state subsidies |
| Hope Creek, NJ | 8.7 | 6.6 | Operating dependent on state subsidies |
| Braidwood 1 & 2, IL | 20.3 | 15.4 | Operating, shutdown threatened |
| La Salle 1 & 2, IL | 19.4 | 14.7 | Operating, shutdown threatened |
| Total (20 Reactors) | 173.7 | 131.7 | |

Notes: Generation figures are from the U.S. Energy Information Administration report for 2019. Avoided GHG calculation assumes that only combined cycle gas turbines ramp up for lost nuclear generation, with an associated 2.3% methane leak rate. This results in 758 grams CO₂e per kilowatt-hour.

END