



Support for Nuclear Energy and Workers

WHEREAS, Nuclear energy makes up 18 percent of the U.S. energy portfolio — one in every five megawatts — but comprises 60 percent of our low-carbon power. Nuclear power is by far the largest producer of electricity that does not contribute greenhouse gases to the atmosphere; and

WHEREAS, To meet emission and reliability targets, government officials must create policies that put all low-carbon energy technologies (i.e. renewables, nuclear, fossil fuels with carbon capture) on equal footing, while exploring options that spur investment in nuclear advancement; and

WHEREAS, More than half of U.S. states have enacted Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS), mandating that utilities use more alternative energy sources. While programs aim to “de-carbonize” the energy grid, nuclear power is commonly excluded from both subsidies and RPS mandates; and

WHEREAS, Between heavily subsidized competitors and historically low prices of other energy sources, the reasons for premature nuclear plant closures are primarily economic. The Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI), cites 30 reactors that have been taken out of service and are currently in various stages of being dismantled, with several more poised on the horizon; and

WHEREAS, Policy makers are beginning to recognize the pivotal role nuclear generators play in minimizing greenhouse gas emissions and providing grid reliability, leading some states to take steps to preserve existing nuclear facilities.

WHEREAS, The closing and demolition of nuclear power generators is very specialized and requires highly skilled labor. The entire process can take many years. Decommissioning power plants without the trained and experienced unionized workforce that now exists presents serious risk to both workers and the public, and

WHEREAS, UWUA members have proven our ability to safely and efficiently decommission nuclear power plants. For example, after running the Big Rock Point facility in Charlevoix, Michigan from 1962 to 1997, UWUA members safely decommissioned it and returned the space to green field; and

WHEREAS, To minimize liabilities, utilities are increasingly outsourcing the work of closing and fully decommissioning plants by selling closed nuclear facilities to third-party decommissioning companies. After purchase, these companies are paid through established funds, providing incentive to do the work cheaply and hastily in order to reap maximum profit. Some utilities are misusing the bankruptcy process to evade collective bargaining agreements.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, The UWUA vigorously opposes closing safe, well-operated nuclear power plants. Not only are good paying jobs lost, but plant closures have a ripple effect on the communities in which they operate. Additionally, emissions rise and our air quality decreases when nuclear generation is replaced with lower cost energy generated from fossil fuels; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, At the state level, UWUA and affiliates will be actively involved in the legislative process to fight for credit to be given to nuclear powerplants for the role they play in delivering zero-carbon energy; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, The UWUA encourages the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to consider the U.S. Department of Energy’s proposal to implement policies that value baseload power sources like nuclear, and that are able to store months of fuel — ensuring resilient and reliable electricity; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, The UWUA strongly supports the development of next generation nuclear power technologies such as Small Modular Reactors (SMR). However, we can’t wait decades for a revival of the nuclear power sector. We must continue to oppose premature closures, and make full use of our current reactors and workforce; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, The UWUA condemns corporations that abuse the bankruptcy process to evade

collective bargaining agreements. In such cases, the UWUA and affiliates will make full use of the legal process to fight for companies and any successors to honor union workers and their contracts; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, The decommissioning of nuclear power plants is UWUA members' work. As members working and living in the communities impacted by the decommissioning process, we will make sure is carried out with the same professionalism, rigor and attention to detail as we did when these plants were running, and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, UWUA officers and staff stand ready to assist any UWUA local union facing the closure of a nuclear power plant. Collective action and resources are the most effective means of protecting our members' jobs and the health of their communities.