

Public Hearing:
Employment Issues Involved in the Production of Electricity from Nuclear Sources
Bicameral Nuclear Energy Caucus
Wednesday, May 23, 2018
8:00 AM

Central Pennsylvania Building & Construction Trades Council
Joe Gusler, President
Written Testimony

Chairman Aument, Chairman Yudichak, Chairwoman Corbin, Chairman Matzie, and members of the caucus, thank you for the opportunity to talk about employment issues involved in the production of electricity from nuclear sources. As President of the Central Pennsylvania Building & Construction Trades Council, I come before you on behalf of our 35 trade affiliates and approximately 5,800 tradespeople.

Three Mile Island (TMI) employs 675 people directly through Exelon. These are highly-skilled, good paying jobs with benefits. Add the thousands of trades men and women who do maintenance and outage work at TMI. Many of these skilled and well-trained workers also live locally. These employees support our local communities. Their children go to school here. They shop in local stores. They eat at local restaurants. They give back to their communities. Losing these jobs alone would have a huge, negative impact on local economies.

On December 29, 2017, a community leader from Vermont wrote an op-ed in a local paper as a cautionary tale of the impact of the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Generating Station closure. The story is a familiar one. When the plant opened in 1972, it “created economic opportunity” for the region. It brought good paying jobs, low energy prices, cleaner air and a stable tax revenue. The plant’s property taxes drastically improved public services and schools.

When Vermont Yankee closed, the jobs and the tax revenue disappeared and have not returned. Employees were forced to retire or move to find similar jobs in other states. Housing prices dropped. Also, in response to the closure, property taxes were raised by 20 percent to help replace lost tax revenue. The municipal budget was cut by 20 percent, including the elimination of the town’s local police department. Economic impact studies can forecast the nature and scale of losses, but there are no targeted programs or funding that exist to support nuclear host communities after a plant closure. Community leaders in Vermont realized that it was up to the region to take action because no help would be offered.

If you expand to look at all of Pennsylvania, there are five nuclear power plants with over 3,000 full-time employees. Again, when you add the Building Trades and companies in Pennsylvania that provide equipment and indirect services to our nuclear facilities, you are talking about 16,000 jobs. You may have heard this before, but I bet the members of the PA House and Senate would jump at the opportunity to help if I said we were creating 16,000 new jobs in Pennsylvania. What we are asking for is your help in saving 16,000 good paying jobs in Pennsylvania.

I would like to ask the members of the Nuclear Energy Caucus to go to their colleagues with a sense of urgency on this issue. Once a nuclear power plant shuts down, it is permanent.

Thank you for your time.