Nuclear Plant Decommissioning Act of 2014

Original Sponsor: Senator Sanders
Original Co-sponsors: Senators Boxer and Markey

Those communities that are most likely to experience the safety and economic impacts of nuclear plant decommissioning deserve a role in shaping those decommissioning plans for nuclear reactors near or within their jurisdictions. This role is especially critical given the potential for non-operational plants to sit for decades before removal and decontamination. The Nuclear Plant Decommissioning Act of 2014 would transform a process that is weighted almost entirely toward the power plant licensees into one that strikes a reasonable balance between licensees and the impacted communities.

Bill Summary:

The Nuclear Plant Decommissioning Act gives states and local communities a meaningful role in the development of reactor decommissioning plans:

- The Act would require licensees to consult with the host state and state and local governments within 50 miles of the plant when drafting a proposed decommissioning plan, also known as a Post Shutdown Decommissioning Activities Report (PSDAR). This consultation would help ensure that state and local concerns are identified and considered.

- The Act would require the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to solicit public input on the proposed PSDAR before the document is finalized and approved.

- The Act would require the NRC to evaluate and formally adopt or reject a proposed decommissioning plan (which it is not required to do now under current law), thereby improving accountability and transparency.

- If a host state supports the proposed plan, the licensee can secure formal NRC approval in an expedited fashion; otherwise the NRC must consider amending the proposed plan based on the host state’s recommendations. This incentivizes collaboration between the licensee and the host state while ensuring a reasonable balance between them.

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