Beyond Nuclear Response to PUCO Staff/FirstEnergy Settlement Proposal:

"PUCO Staff's multi-billion dollar ratepayer bailout, for 20 more years of radioactive Russian roulette at Davis-Besse, amounts to Faustian Fission, and must be stopped!"

Columbus, OH and Washington, DC--National environmental watchdog group Beyond Nuclear today blasted the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) Staff's announced settlement agreement with FirstEnergy, and calls upon the PUCO Commissioners to reject the bad deal.

"The ratepayers of Ohio would be gouged additional billions of dollars on their electricity bills to prop up the uncompetitive Davis-Besse atomic reactor, effectively being forced to fund 20 more years of radioactive Russian roulette at the problem-plagued atomic reactor," said Beyond Nuclear's Radioactive Waste Watchdog, Kevin Kamps. "This outrageous, unacceptably risky ratepayer robbery must be stopped, and Davis-Besse retired, as planned, at the end of its initial 40-year license, at the latest, on Earth Day (April 22), 2017," Kamps added.

Kamps pointed to the severe, and worsening, cracking of the concrete containment Shield Building at Davis-Besse as an increasing safety risk of age-related degradation.

"Every time it freezes at Davis-Besse, the cracks grow by a half-inch or more," Kamps reported, "due to Ice-Wedging Crack Propagation, from water locked in the walls." Citing a large number of potential root causes that have not been addressed, Kamps dubbed FirstEnergy's Blizzard of 1978 root cause theory for the unprecedented severe cracking a "Snow Job of epic proportions." He also emphasized that the crack growth is due, ironically enough, to the "White Wash of 2012," FirstEnergy's rushed weather sealant, applied to the Shield Building exterior "forty years too late."

At recent U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards meetings at the agency's headquarters in Rockville, MD, FirstEnergy acknowledged a growing risk that an earthquake, tornado, or other force could cause large chunks of concrete to fall off the exterior of the Davis-Besse Shield Building, down onto safety-significant systems, structures, and components (SSCs) below. These include borated water storage tanks (essential for nuclear criticality control in the operating
reactor core, as well as the high-level radioactive waste storage pool), the Auxiliary Building (housing numerous safety-significant SSCs), and elements of the electrical transmission system (essential for powering safety and cooling systems). In recent documents filed with NRC, FirstEnergy also admitted the cracking can grow nine inches per year.

"This proposed deal with the devil is dangerous for Ohio," Kamps said. "There could be hell to pay for running an age-degraded, problem-plagued reactor for two more decades, with a cracked concrete containment," Kamps added. "In such Faustian fission, Mephistopheles could come in the form of a meltdown," Kamps said.

The "Calculation of Reactor Accident Consequences" study (or CRAC-2, also known as the Sandia Siting Study or NUREG/CR-2239), commissioned by NRC and carried out by Sandia National Labs in 1982, revealed that a catastrophic radioactivity release at Davis-Besse could cause: 1,400 "peak early fatalities" (acute radiation poisoning deaths); 73,000 "peak early injuries"; 10,000 "peak cancer deaths" (latent cancer fatalities); and $84 billion in property damage. However, as AP investigative reporter Jeff Donn reported in his June 2011 four-part series "Aging Nukes," populations have soared around atomic reactors like Davis-Besse in the past three decades, meaning casualty figures would be significantly higher now. And, when adjusted for inflation to 2014 dollar figures, property damage would now top $203 billion.

Beyond Nuclear, based in Takoma Park, MD, has worked for the past five years with local grassroots environmental coalition partners (including Citizen Environmental Alliance of Southwestern Ontario, Don't Waste Michigan, and the Ohio Green Party), to officially intervene before NRC's Atomic Safety and Licensing Board, against the 20-year license extension (2017-2037) at Davis-Besse. Toledo attorney Terry Lodge has served as the environmental coalition's legal counsel.

In 2013, Sierra Club -- also an official party to the PUCO proceeding, and opposed to PUCO Staff's settlement agreement with FirstEnergy -- joined the environmental coalition to challenge risky, experimental steam generator replacements at Davis-Besse. Arnie Gundersen, Chief Engineer at Fairewinds Associates, Inc., of Burlington, Vermont, served as the coalition's expert witness. Gundersen served as Friends of the Earth's expert witness in its successful bid to permanently close two reactors at San Onofre, CA in 2013, due to defective replacement steam generator risks.

On behalf of its members and supporters in Ohio, Beyond Nuclear has also joined with a broad coalition of environmental, public interest, and ratepayer groups, and spoken out -- including in written filings submitted to the PUCO, oral testimony at PUCO public hearings in Akron and Toledo, and at protest rallies at PUCO HQ in Columbus -- against FirstEnergy's attempted nuclear power and coal-burning plant bailouts at ratepayer expense.

The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) and the Northeast Ohio Public Energy Council (NOPEC) have stated that: “OCC and NOPEC’s expert preliminarily
projects that the new PPA [Power Purchase Agreement] proposal will cost consumers approximately $3.9 billion. And the settlement’s impact on Ohioans’ electric bills does not end with the PPA charges: the settlement contains a virtual holiday wish list of favorable ratemaking for FirstEnergy.”

"When the Crystal River, Florida atomic reactor owner realized replacing its fatally fractured concrete containment would have cost many billions, it gave up the ghost, and permanently shut down instead," said Kamps. "Even if the entire $4 billion ratepayer bailout was devoted to replacing Davis-Besse's Shield Building, it probably wouldn't be enough. The problem is, FirstEnergy has no plan whatsoever to replace the Shield Building, and there is no repair for the cracks -- there is not even a way to stop the cracks from growing," Kamps added.

Beyond Nuclear published analysis and commentary on the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards meeting that took place on November 4, 2015 about Davis-Besse's 20-year license extension. The NRC ACRS meeting largely focused on the severe, and worsening, cracking of Davis-Besse's concrete containment Shield Building. The Beyond Nuclear analysis is entitled FAUSTIAN FISSION, and argues that forcing ratepayers to fork over billions of dollars in bailouts to FirstEnergy to subsidize 20 more years of radioactive Russian roulette on the Great Lakes shoreline is an outrage, that must be stopped.

See the PDF version (or see the Word version, for live hyper-links to relevant documents). [Full web post online at: http://www.beyondnuclear.org/safety/2015/11/6/davis-besse-a-multi-billion-dollar-ratepayer-bailout-for-20.html]

Additional information can be found at these Beyond Nuclear web posts about the Nov. 4 NRC ACRS meeting:

**Beyond Nuclear watchdogs Davis-Besse Shield Building cracking at NRC ACRS meeting**

Links to FirstEnergy's power point presentation, NRC staff also presented a power point, and had back up slides, Beyond Nuclear's Kevin Kamps has prepared notes/commentary/analysis. [Full web post online at: http://www.beyondnuclear.org/safety/2015/11/5/beyond-nuclear-watchdogs-davis-besse-shield-building-cracking.html]

**NRC ACRS to discuss Davis-Besse Shield Building cracking, Nov. 4-7**

Extensive background information on this significant safety risk. [Full web post online at: http://www.beyondnuclear.org/safety/2015/11/3/nrc-acrs-to-discuss-davis-besse-shield-building-cracking-nov.html]