

Testimony of Charles K. Johnson on SB 360

Before the Senate Energy and Environment Committee

March 23, 2021

Talking points

As Peter Bergel said earlier, I helped draft and advocate for Ballot Measure 7, which Oregon voters passed in 1980. I urge your opposition to SB 360 and all other attempts to place loopholes in this sound and sensible law that has as much validity today as it did when the voters approved it.

It is certainly not wise to change this law in favor of nuclear power plant designs that have never been built anywhere and are, therefore, unproven in terms of their function, safety, cost, or the time it takes to complete the plant construction. In addition the NuScale design creates the same waste that is currently the concern of our existing nuclear power moratorium law – it actually generates more waste per kilowatt than a larger nuclear power plant.

As others have said, this high-level waste remains deadly for an inconceivably long time. By way of local illustration – the Trojan nuclear power plant in Rainier, Oregon has been closed since 1992. Yet, the spent nuclear fuel in dry casks that remains stored at the plant site is still so radioactively hot it would kill someone who stood next to it unshielded within a couple of minutes. KOIN TV did a story about five years ago and the physical heat was still so great that it could be seen on camera creating heat wave distortions billowing out of the cask vents.

Reprocessing nuclear spent fuel to reuse its fissionable materials actually produces much larger and more complex amounts of waste similar to that which is stored in the leaking storage tanks at Hanford, so is not the panacea that it is presented as being. It doesn't make the waste go away.

We understand this legislation is not going to a work session. If it ever does, we urge a no vote. Thank you for your time and attention.