

News Release

PENNSYLVANIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Lawmakers Announce Formation of First Ever Nuclear Energy Caucus

(HARRISBURG) – Senators Ryan Aument (R-36) and John Yudichak (D-14) along with Representatives Becky Corbin (R-155) and Rob Matzie (D-16) today announced the formation of a bi-partisan, bi-cameral caucus of Pennsylvania’s General Assembly to focus on nuclear energy issues. This will be the first nuclear caucus in a state legislature in the history of the United States.

“This caucus will give members of the General Assembly an opportunity to become more educated about nuclear energy’s economic and environmental value and provide another voice in other important discussions, including electric power reliability, affordability and safety,” said Senator Aument.

Pennsylvania is home to five nuclear stations, making it the second largest nuclear capacity state in America. The electricity produced from Pennsylvania’s nuclear sources represents nearly 37% of the Commonwealth’s total power production, helping make the state the second largest producer of electricity in the nation and the top net exporter of electricity.

“Given our state’s prominence in energy production, it is important that lawmakers focus on an inclusive energy policy that promotes and respects the contribution that each resource offers,” said Senator Yudichak. “The Nuclear Energy Caucus, like the other energy caucuses in the General Assembly, is a great place to advance the many unique attributes that nuclear power sources offer in balancing the overall energy mix.”

The lawmakers said that nuclear power is considered one of the cleanest, safest, most reliable and affordable sources of electricity today. They cited the performance of the plants as a baseload generating resource as well as the economic benefits they produce locally and statewide as examples of each station’s value.

Representative Matzie noted that Pennsylvania’s nuclear plants each year contribute approximately \$2.3 billion to the state’s gross domestic product and support more than 15,600 direct and secondary full time jobs. He added that the plants have an annual payroll of \$360 million and produce approximately \$81 million in tax revenue from induced economic activity. The nuclear energy industry also purchases more than \$1.8 billion of materials, services and fuel from more than 4,150 companies in Pennsylvania.

“Pennsylvania truly is the keystone state of electric power production, and the nuclear sources are one of the powerhouses that contribute to our economy,” said Representative Matzie. “Within their host communities and across the entire state, the nuclear power sector is generating much more than electricity - it is producing economic growth through employment at the plants, indirect employment through vendors and contracted labor, as well as civil and philanthropic engagement and the taxes paid by the industry’s workforce and businesses.”

Representative Corbin said that in addition to the economic benefits, she is pleased to promote an energy source that is America's largest source of carbon-free electricity, noting that no other electric power producer that is available 24 hours per day, 7 days a week generates as much emission-free electricity as nuclear energy.

"Energy policy is inextricably linked to helping us meet environmental goals," said Rep. Corbin. "Nuclear power production is leading the way in helping us achieve the simultaneous goals of having a safe, reliable and economic baseload generating source that also provides 63% of all carbon-free electricity in the United States, and over 90% of Pennsylvania's carbon-free electricity." Average annual CO₂ emissions would be about 52 tons greater if the state's nuclear stations were decommissioned, she noted.

Rep. Corbin offered that nuclear stations also help avoid other substantial emissions, including SO₂ and NO_x. "Having a robust and balanced energy portfolio that includes nuclear energy helps us manage the many challenges we have in meeting environmental goals for other emitting sources," said Rep. Corbin. "This is just another added benefit from these resources, which work alongside other electric power producers, to the benefit of the bulk power system, consumers, and the overall economy."

"Our collective goal is to have a continuing, ongoing dialogue about Pennsylvania's nuclear energy assets," said Sen. Aument. "Certainly, as we look around the country, there is little doubt that nuclear energy sources – like many other resources – are struggling." The Senator cited that since 2013, five nuclear stations have ceased power production and begun decommissioning, with another seven plants already announced that they plan to close by 2019, in addition to two other plants planning to shutter four more reactors by 2025.

"All of these events, coupled with Pennsylvania's status as a top nuclear power producer, invite us to a timely discussion on the important role that nuclear power plays in the Commonwealth's economy and environment," said Sen. Aument. "I, along with the co-chairs of this caucus, look forward to working on policies that promote all of Pennsylvania's energy resources, including nuclear energy."

There are currently 67 members of the Nuclear Energy Caucus. The first meeting of the Nuclear Energy Caucus is scheduled for March 22, 2017.

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