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Standardized Nuclear Power in Californiaâ€™s Long Term Energy Strategy

I respectfully encourage the California Energy Commission to give greater consideration to standardized nuclear power in Californiaâ€™s long-term energy planning.

California will need increasing amounts of reliable electricity as transportation, buildings, industry, data centers, and other sectors become more electrified. Wind, solar, and battery storage are valuable resources and should remain important parts of Californiaâ€™s energy mix. I believe nuclear power should also receive serious consideration as a source of firm, low-carbon electricity.

Modern nuclear plants can potentially operate for 60 years and, with appropriate regulatory review and aging management, for as long as 80 years. Over that period, the same site, major structures, transmission connection, and much of the supporting infrastructure can provide large amounts of dependable electricity.

I respectfully ask the CEC, in future IEPR work or other appropriate proceedings, to compare nuclear power with other clean-energy resources on a full lifecycle and system basis, not only by initial construction cost or generator-level cost per megawatt-hour. Such an evaluation should consider reliability, capacity factor, expected service life, replacement cycles, land use, transmission requirements, storage needs and losses, mining and material requirements, recycling, waste generation, and total infrastructure needs over a 60 to 80 year period.

Nuclear power has disadvantages that should be evaluated honestly, including high initial construction costs, cooling-water requirements, fuel-cycle impacts, radioactive waste management, and the need for strong safety oversight. At the same time, it offers high energy density, a small land footprint, low lifecycle carbon emissions, small fuel requirements, and a comparatively small physical waste stream.

I am not asking California to choose nuclear instead of renewable energy. I am asking that nuclear be seriously evaluated as a complementary source of firm clean electricity that could reduce the amount of storage, transmission, overbuilding, and repeated equipment replacement required in a low-carbon grid.

I also encourage the Commission to examine whether standardized reactor deployment, using a limited number of proven designs built repeatedly, could reduce construction cost and project risk compared with treating each reactor as a unique megaproject.

As California plans for growing electricity demand, I respectfully ask the Commission to

keep nuclear energy open for serious consideration and to evaluate it using long-term reliability, lifecycle, and resource-use criteria.