



SIERRA CLUB
ILLINOIS CHAPTER

Dear Governor Pritzker,

The Illinois Environmental Council (IEC), Sierra Club Illinois, and our allies respectfully request that you veto SB76—a bill that would lift Illinois’ decades-old moratorium on new nuclear facilities.

Illinois already has the most nuclear reactors in the country, and we should not add to the growing stockpiles of waste in Illinois communities. The original concerns about constructing new nuclear power plants that led the General Assembly to impose the current moratorium remain today, and in fact, those concerns are arguably greater now than they were in 1987. We are no closer to a national solution for the disposal of dangerous high-level nuclear wastes. As a result, Illinois bears the burden of storing this waste in our communities, including along the shores of Lake Michigan and the Mississippi River. These wastes have significant safety risks and threaten our drinking water and communities.

In addition, nuclear power is extremely expensive. Efforts in other states to build new nuclear plants are plagued with high cost overruns and extensive delays. These exorbitant costs not only dwarf those associated with readily available clean energy technologies, but they also threaten to derail the progress Illinois is now making to deploy win-win solutions like renewable energy, storage, and energy efficiency programs. Illinois should continue prioritizing these investments, which support good union jobs and pathways to prosperity for our marginalized communities, rather than encourage highly speculative proposals for new nuclear energy that jeopardize our clean energy future.

SB76 will not solve any grid capacity issues in Illinois. Illinois does not need the massive, decades-long rate hikes it would take to attempt to site and build new nuclear power plants that wouldn’t be available for over a decade. Illinois does need action and investment now in transmission, storage, energy efficiency, and demand response solutions to ensure adequate capacity and protect consumers from spikes in fossil fuel prices. While Illinois hosts roughly 11 gigawatts of nuclear power, over 700 gigawatts of additional power are awaiting interconnection approval from regional energy markets across the country to backfill the retirement of uneconomic power plants. The majority of these resources waiting in line are solar, wind, and battery storage—proven technologies that are already creating good jobs and delivering consumer savings. These smart solutions should remain our focus.

The rules, regulations, and oversight for all nuclear plants are not up to date. SB76 removes the moratorium on nuclear power without a full study and review of whether current rules and regulations are sufficient to site, build, and operate a nuclear power plant safely. The nuclear moratorium law has been in place since 1987, when the Illinois Commerce Commission supervised and regulated power plants. For the past 25 years, there has been no entity in

Illinois that oversees, regulates, or determines generally what plants are built, when, or where. Moreover, the language about granting certificates of public need and necessity no longer applies. SB76 does nothing to update programs or provide additional capacity to IEPA or IEMA, which would be needed to appropriately regulate nuclear facilities.

The siting laws for nuclear are completely insufficient. There are little to no local nuclear permitting and zoning rules on the books. Any plant could be built anywhere at any time, with only approval at the federal level. The issue is even worse in the case of Small Modular Nuclear Reactors, which are proposed to be small units in shipping containers deployed within communities. Projects could, in theory, be deployed near residences, for example.

Finally, we have not solved the issue of waste. Every lawmaker representing the closed Zion nuclear plant voted no on SB76 because of the devastating long-term impact the closed Zion plant is having on the community. The waste will remain at any of these sites for all time, preventing future development or natural resource protection at any site.

Our community is proud of the work we did together with the General Assembly and stakeholders to enact the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) in 2021. CEJA gives Illinois a roadmap to a clean energy future that generates high-quality jobs equitably and attracts global investments in our communities. To sustain that progress, we must stay the course in implementing that vision and reject proposals that would distract our resources from this framework.

In conclusion, SB76 was moved forward without careful consideration, and signing it would open the door to increased risk, negative environmental impacts, and higher costs for consumers while jeopardizing our progress toward Illinois' clean energy future. Thank you for your consideration of this veto request.

Sincerely,



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