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GRASSROOTS CLEAN ENERGY/ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS:

KERRY-LIEBERMAN DIRTY ENERGY BILL IS NO SOLUTION TO CLIMATE CRISIS

200 environmental, peace, consumer, religious organizations and small businesses today joined together to blast the Kerry-Lieberman “climate” proposal as a taxpayer bailout of the nuclear power industry and other dirty energy interests that would be ineffective at addressing the climate crisis.

The groups pledged to oppose the Kerry- Lieberman bill unless substantial changes are made, including removing all support for nuclear power.

“This bill is just business-as-usual: taxpayer giveaways to giant nuclear and other energy corporations wrapped in the guise of doing something about our climate crisis. To call this a climate bill is greenwashing in the extreme. We need to direct our resources to the fastest, cheapest, cleanest and safest means of reducing carbon emissions—this bill does just the opposite,” said Michael Mariotte, executive director of the Nuclear Information and Resource Service, a national organization based in Takoma Park, MD, which coordinated this statement.

“The climate crisis won’t be solved by increasing reliance on the dirty energy technologies of the past.” said Michael Keegan of the Michigan-based Coalition for a Nuclear-Free Great Lakes, “What we need is an all-out effort to implement the clean technologies that already exist and are improving daily: solar and wind power, distributed energy systems, smart grids, increased energy efficiency—these are the energy technologies of the 21st century.”

Among other provisions, the bill is expected to:

*provide \$54 billion in taxpayer “loan guarantees” for construction of new nuclear reactors. These “loan guarantees” would actually be direct taxpayer loans from the government’s Federal Financing Bank. It would also provide a 10% tax break to wealthy utilities for nuclear construction costs.

*create a “Clean Energy Deployment Administration” (CEDA) with the authority to provide unlimited taxpayer loans for new reactor construction without Congressional oversight.

*support dirty and dangerous reprocessing technologies, authorize billions of dollars in nuclear research and development, and legislatively attempt to speed the nuclear reactor licensing process despite a recent report from the Bipartisan Policy Center that found the industry is primarily to blame for the slow pace of licensing.

*continue to support offshore oil drilling near much of the U.S. coastline despite the calamitous BP oil spill.

*provide \$10 billion for wasteful and impossible “clean coal” development.

*target a reduction in carbon emissions of only 17% from 2005 levels by 2020—far lower than most scientists believe is necessary.

Groups in New England were particularly upset at their Senators’ actions. “Senator John Kerry’s blatant support of the nuclear industry has left thousands of his Massachusetts constituents questioning his judgment,” said Sandra Gavutis, executive director of C-10, a grassroots group in eastern Massachusetts.

“Senator Joe Lieberman is the nuclear power industries’ best friend in the U.S. Senate. His support for a major federal loan guarantee for the nuclear power industry comes as no surprise. However, he does not represent the interests of the people of Connecticut, who demand investment instead in safe, clean, renewable energy,” added Nancy Burton of the Connecticut Coalition Against Millstone.

In an affront to environmentalists across the world, Senators Kerry and Lieberman originally chose April 26—the 24th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear catastrophe—to unveil their “climate bill” that would provide vast new government support for construction of new nuclear reactors and make future Chernobyl-like disasters even more likely. Only the sudden withdrawal of support for the bill by South Carolina Senator Lindsay Graham changed the bill’s release date.

“Everyone needs to face the tragic truth about the very real consequences of nuclear catastrophe,” says Glenn Carroll, coordinator of Nuclear Watch South. “The Chernobyl accident is *still* happening as wildlife intrudes the ruined reactor and spreads radiation around the countryside. The massive concrete sarcophagus is 24 years old and threatens to collapse, initiating another deadly plume of radiation to the environment. Sun and wind promise us complete freedom from the untenable threat of irreversible nuclear contamination and our leaders must be pressed upon to heed Chernobyl’s warning against investing in more nuclear reactors.” Nuclear Watch South is based in Georgia where the giant Southern Company is slated to receive the first government nuclear payouts for two new reactors at the Vogtle site near Augusta.

“In the past month we’ve commemorated Chernobyl--the worst man-made disaster in history--and seen two new disasters: a massive oil spill on our Gulf Coast and a coal mine explosion,” said Mariotte. “Nuclear power, oil and coal are not solutions to climate change, they are enormous environmental problems. These Senators should know better. The widespread opposition to this bill indicated by these 200 organizations indicates the American people want real solutions to the climate crisis, not more expensive bailouts for dirty energy interests.”

Signers listed by State

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