

## Nuclear Energy Vital for New York



By Melvin Burruss

Historically, demand for electricity has always grown and will continue to do so, despite the implementation of new technologies and efficiency efforts. That demand is significantly affected by today's growing dependence on a myriad of devices that need to be "plugged in."

Currently, more than 50 percent of the nation's electricity is produced by coal-burning plants, resulting in billions of tons of greenhouse gas emissions annually. Imagine if that 50 percent were changed to a mix of clean nuclear and renewable energy sources. The environmental benefits to our communities would be enormous.

In recent years New York State has forced many coal burning power plants out of business to reduce our carbon footprint. However, what will we use to replace this energy load and the jobs lost as a result?

If the re-licensing of Indian Point Energy Center is not allowed, we would also lose about one third of the Downstate region's energy supply and thousands would be added to the unemployment lines.

Nuclear facilities like Indian Point play an important role in maintaining our energy supply and bolstering our economic health. It offers opportunities for high paying jobs and is safer and cleaner than coal or natural gas. Nuclear energy also reduces our dependence on foreign sources of energy. Without it there would be a significant increase in harmful airborne pollutants and toxins that are especially detrimental to our children and elderly citizens.

The Journal of Natural Resources & Environmental Law has shown that pollutants from fossil-fuel power plants are linked to diseases of both the respiratory and cardiovascular systems, which greatly affects New Yorkers living in poorer communities, many of which house a variety of greenhouse gas emitting facilities.

If we really want to make progress in New York in cleaning up our environment and ensuring affordable electricity to meet demand, while providing opportunities for our communities to prosper economically, then nuclear power must have a significant role in downstate New York's energy future.

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