

Your View: Proposed legislation would save Pennsylvania nuclear power jobs

By Frank Graboski

| THE MORNING CALL |

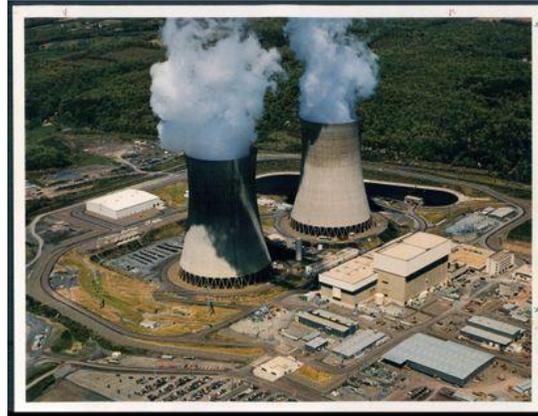
There has been quite a bit of confusion about the role that nuclear power plays in meeting Pennsylvania's electricity needs- and what is at stake if nuclear power is lost. This is of real concern with last week's news that Three Mile Island – one of five nuclear plants in Pennsylvania – will close for good this September because state lawmakers did not act in time to level the playing field for nuclear energy. Pennsylvania's nuclear power constitutes 93% of all zero-carbon electricity produced in this state, according to the Nuclear Energy Institute, employs

16,000 people statewide and contributes to the tax base of countless towns, cities and the state. As president



of the labor union that supports the Susquehanna nuclear power plant, in Luzerne County, I want to talk about those 16,000 jobs, the people behind them and the impact they will have on Pennsylvania.

These plants are not just buildings and equipment sitting on a hill; they're filled with thousands of people who work with a great deal of pride and dedication day in and day out to deliver safe, reliable, carbon-free energy to the grid. These people and their families are part of your community – you may see them at the grocery store, coaching your child's Little League team, volunteering at an area food pantry, or in a church. Many employees grew up with the plant in their backyard and are the second – or even the third – generation in their family to support it. And because of challenges nuclear plants are facing, these people are extremely worried that they will have to pick up their families and leave the life they've known to find employment in another state if Pennsylvania's nuclear plants close.



Members of IBEW Local 1600 staff the Susquehanna plant, north of the Lehigh Valley. They take issue with claims that nuclear plants are inefficient or past their time. Nuclear plants are efficient, are constantly adding new technology and have millions of dollars invested in them each year. Our teams are continually seeking and implementing new processes and equipment to keep the plant running 24/7/365 at capacity rates of near 100%, and at costs that are as low as possible.

While our members come to their job every day focused on working safely and efficiently, they also can't help but wonder and worry about what the future will hold. With each day that passes, the deadline for the legislature to act closes in.

Opponents of Senate Bill 510 and House Bill 11 continue to say that this legislation is not needed, as most of Pennsylvania's nuclear plants are profitable. However, they are leaving out half the story. For years now, we've heard that the profits of these plants continue to decline, and a recent report by PJM's Independent Market Monitor, the same one that shows the plants were profitable in 2018, also shows that most will be unprofitable in a few years. This trend is real.

IBEW Local 1600 supports legislation to amend the commonwealth's Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards Act, to include nuclear energy. AEPS requires that 18% of the electricity supplied by Pennsylvania's electric distribution companies and electric generation suppliers come from alternative energy resources by 2021. AEPS currently recognizes 16 other forms of energy yet excludes the largest source of zero-carbon energy in the state. Adding nuclear energy to AEPS would address this market flaw and put nuclear plants on a level playing field so they can compete.

Even though lawmakers and Gov. Wolf did not act in time to save Three Mile Island, there is time to enact changes that benefit the remaining four plants, each of which is facing the same negative market conditions as TMI.

Losing these plants will cost much more than maintaining them. Not only would rates go up more than what is projected with this legislation, according to a Nuclear Energy Caucus report, but communities throughout the state will lose its people — and all the things they bring, from support of local businesses, to state, local and school tax contributions and support for organizations and services that are crucial to those in need.

You don't have to take my word for it. Google Vermont Yankee Nuclear Plant and the town of Vernon, Vermont. When Vermont Yankee closed, housing prices plummeted, taxes went up 20% and their police force was lost. Like Entergy — Vermont Yankee's owner — Exelon, Talen and First Energy will be just fine if the nuclear plants they own in Pennsylvania close. Who will not be are the people — workers, families and communities. The time to act is now, and the fact remains: once a nuclear plant closes, it is closed forever.

Please support nuclear power in Pennsylvania.

Frank E. Graboski is the president of IBEW Local 1600 in Allentown.