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NARUC
National Association of Regulatory
Utility Commissioners

The Role of Nuclear Generation in the Clean Energy Transition Explored in New White Paper

NARUC and Energy Ventures Analysis Provide Critical Insights for Regulators

WASHINGTON (August 26, 2022) — The National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners today announced the release of a new white paper on the role of nuclear energy as a keystone clean energy resource. Authored by Energy Ventures Analysis, Inc. under subcontract to the NARUC Center for Partnerships and Innovation, *Nuclear Energy as a Keystone Clean Energy Resource* explores nuclear energy’s role in providing carbon-free electricity and highlights key considerations for regulators to keep in mind as decarbonization efforts continue across many states and utilities.

Since the first commercial nuclear reactors began operating in December 1957, nuclear energy has been the single largest source of zero-carbon energy in the U.S. In 2021, nuclear energy accounted for approximately 20 percent of total U.S. electric generation and almost half of its carbon-free electricity.

The paper includes a discussion of the reliability and cost attributes of nuclear energy. EVA finds that retaining and expanding the nuclear energy resource base will be of critical importance to achieve ambitious state and national decarbonization goals. However, barriers to a faster and more significant deployment of new nuclear energy resources persist, and many existing nuclear plants face economic pressure and competition from other resources. Reducing or removing these hurdles is within the purview of many stakeholders on the federal, state and local levels, including state public utility commissions. The paper reviews the state of the nuclear industry and the impacts of planned retirements and identifies opportunities for decisionmakers to support future nuclear expansion efforts aligned with the public interest.

“Nuclear energy needs to be part of the conversation as states, communities, Tribal Nations and utilities across the country work to meet clean energy goals and tackle climate change without decreasing access to energy,” said Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Energy, U.S. Department of Energy, Dr. Kathryn Huff. “This report provides a framework for decision makers to start those conversations.”

“States play a vital role in moving the ball forward on advanced nuclear technology deployment. Ensuring that state energy regulators understand the opportunities that nuclear can help to unlock, as well as the challenges in deploying this technology effectively is essential to ensure that nuclear continues to support grid reliability and carbon reduction goals,” said Commissioner Anthony O’Donnell of Maryland, co-chair of the DOE-NARUC Nuclear Energy Partnership and chair of the NARUC Subcommittee on Nuclear Issues – Waste Disposal.

“For the first time in a generation, several advanced nuclear reactors are expected to deploy within the decade, underscoring how timely it is for state utility regulators to begin understanding the capabilities, costs, and benefits of these emerging technologies,” noted CPI Senior Director Danielle Sass Byrnett.

“Nuclear energy is more important than ever for America because traditional fossil plants are closing putting reliability in jeopardy,” said Commissioner Tim Echols of Georgia, co-chair of the Nuclear Energy Partnership and vice chair of the NARUC Subcommittee on Nuclear Issues – Waste Disposal. “With the rise of electric vehicles and a growing electric load, carbon-free nuclear power generation becomes critical in helping our country and states meet our climate goals.”

To complement the release of the white paper, NARUC developed a webinar that details key takeaways and offers insights into future work. You can view a recording of this webinar on NARUC’s YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQ2lhN9Dt74>. Webinar slides are available here: <https://pubs.naruc.org/pub/916FC2AB-1866-DAAC-99FB-1A9F58CA5ECB>.

The report was developed as part of the DOE-NARUC Nuclear Energy Partnership, which was established in 2021 with support from the U.S. DOE Office of Nuclear Energy. NEP’s objectives are to provide opportunities for state public service commissions to better understand barriers and opportunities related to the U.S. nuclear fleet.

Download the paper at <https://bit.ly/NARUCNuclearKeystone>.

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About NARUC

NARUC is a non-profit organization founded in 1889 whose members include the governmental agencies that are engaged in the regulation of utilities and carriers in the fifty states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. NARUC’s member agencies regulate telecommunications, energy, and water utilities. NARUC represents the interests of state public utility commissions before the three branches of the federal government.