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*****Media Advisory*****
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On Thursday June 18, Duke Energy, the French-owned nuclear reactor vendor AREVA and USEC Inc. are expected to announce plans for a new nuclear power plant known as the EPR at the US Department of Energy (DOE)'s Portsmouth nuclear reservation located in Piketon, Ohio.

A number of hard questions must be asked, first regarding costs. Recent studies have placed the cost of generating power from nuclear reactors at 25 to 30 cents per kilowatt hour - three times current electric rates¹. Construction costs are so astronomically high that utility companies are looking to the federal government to provide billions in loan guarantees and insurance, while expecting ratepayers to help finance construction costs through higher monthly electric bills years before the first kilowatt is generated.

Timing is also a concern. The last nuclear power plant to start operations took 23 years to build². There's no fixed data on how long a new generation of reactors will take to construct, but if the first EPR reactor being built by AREVA in Olkiluoto, Finland is any indication, this plant will not be operational for many years. Originally meant to be completed in the summer of 2009, the reactor is 50% over budget and so far behind schedule AREVA won't estimate a completion date³.

What can be done with the radioactive waste? At 1,600 Megawatts, the EPR will generate thousands of tons of deadly radioactive waste over its lifetime, and this waste will remain dangerous to human health for at least 100,000 years. Nationally, the Yucca Mountain, Nevada disposal site has come off the agenda. The DOE's Office of Environmental Management recently accepted a unanimous recommendation by the Site Specific Advisory Board overseeing the cleanup at Piketon to never store spent nuclear fuel at the site. Cost of disposal can exceed cost of production, driving up expenses per kilowatt hour even further.

Cost, timing, safety are critical issues. But what for? Ohio doesn't have a market for new capacity, because it doesn't need more power. According to the DOE's Energy Information Administration, sales of megawatt hours of electricity have been gradually declining since the year 2000⁴. Ohio has enough excess power that a recent auction forced First Energy to accept lower cost power supplies than its own, incidentally at a much lower rate than power from this new nuclear plant could provide.

Proponents of this project are likely to seek Federal loan guarantees, potential subsidies and tax breaks, stimulus dollars, and other forms of public funding. Before this proposal moves forward, Ohio must seek a realistic assessment of the need, cost, and role this plant might play in Ohio's energy future.

The Sierra Club seeks the fastest, cheapest, and cleanest climate change and energy solutions, and the construction of new nuclear power generation does not qualify.

¹See for example: Severance, Craig A., "Business Risks and Costs of New Nuclear Power", page1, January 2, 2009.

²Tennessee Valley Authority's Watts Bar nuclear generating plant began construction in 1973 and completed in 1996.

³Kanter, James, "In Finland, Nuclear Renaissance Runs into Trouble", The New York Times, May 28, 2009.

⁴"Retail Sales of Electricity by State by Sector by Provider (EIA-861)"