

California Legislature

June 20, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

RE: Reevaluating Nuclear Power

Dear President Obama:

The undersigned members of the California Legislative Environmental Caucus urge you to take a fresh look at the United States' nuclear policies and energy priorities in light of recent events, including the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster and the recent decision by Germany to phase-out nuclear power and replace it with clean, renewable energy within the next decade. The earthquake and subsequent nuclear meltdown in Japan has given the world a renewed perspective on the safety risks of nuclear power generation, and provided a wake-up call to the United States and other nations to reevaluate our dependence on an energy source that carries with it such profound risks.

The disaster in Japan graphically illustrates that nuclear power, which has been extolled by some as safe and reliable, is neither. History has shown us time and again that natural disasters can undermine even the most fortified structures with the best human planning. The damage caused to Japan's nuclear plant has resulted in community-wide evacuations, contamination of food supplies, economic disruption, grid instability, and devastating public health and environment damage. Japan's crisis has forced countries around the world to consider the economic and public health implications of a nuclear meltdown in their own backyards, and to expeditiously develop clean, renewable energy alternatives that can replace nuclear energy.

On March 31, Germany announced plans to completely abandon nuclear energy over the next 11 years, outlining an ambitious strategy to replace atomic power with renewable energy sources. Chancellor Angela Merkel plans to shut down all 17 nuclear power plants in Germany by 2022 and transition to solar, wind and hydroelectric power. At the time of the Japanese disaster, Germany got about a quarter of its electricity from nuclear power – about the same share as in the United States. Simply put, if Germany can do it, so can America.

Despite California's moratorium dating back to 1976 on any new nuclear plants, our state has two operational power plants representing about 8% of our energy portfolio – Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant and San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station. In 2008, the U.S. Geological Survey discovered a previously unknown yet significant fault line running directly underneath Diablo Canyon, magnifying

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concerns about the safety of nuclear power facilities and the need to replace that risk with safer and cleaner energy sources as soon as possible.

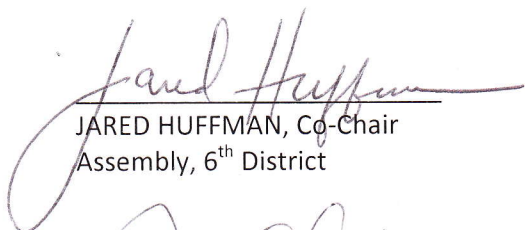
Following Japan's crisis, you ordered all nuclear power plants located near seismic zones to be evaluated. This was the right thing to do. But we ask that you do more. The United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) recognizes that Japanese nuclear facilities are similar in design to some U.S. facilities, and also notes that many U.S. nuclear plants are located in coastal areas that could potentially be affected by a tsunami, including California's two active nuclear plants. We must begin to seriously ask what is the threshold for too much risk?

Moreover, the world is no closer today than it was 50 years ago to safely disposing the large amounts of radioactive waste that are created by nuclear power. This radioactive waste will remain highly toxic for many times longer than the generations that benefited from the power, yet there is no safe, long-term solution for the reprocessing of nuclear fuel rods and the disposal of high-level nuclear waste. Nor is our national security interest advanced by having ever-larger amounts of nuclear material proliferating in the United States and around the world.

Finally, the ongoing federal financial support for nuclear power undermines and distracts from investments in cleaner, safer, renewable power sources. For instance, the energy bill that stalled in Congress last year contained billions of dollars for nuclear research and development programs to make nuclear energy systems more competitive. Though that legislation failed, it sent the wrong message. Just as Germany has recently done, the United States must set a new course that refocuses our priorities and our public investments on solar, wind and other renewable energy sources as part of an ambitious program to phase-out nuclear power within a decade.

A previous generation of Americans stepped up to the challenge of putting a man on the moon within a decade. We urge you to follow that historic example, to look to Germany, Italy and other countries that are re-evaluating the safety and necessity of nuclear power, and to set a new, cleaner, safer course for energy generation in the United States.

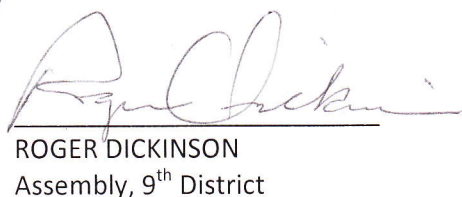
Sincerely,



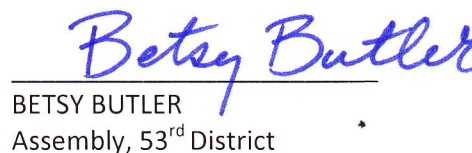
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Assembly, 6th District



FRAN PAVLEY, Co-Chair
Senate, 23rd District


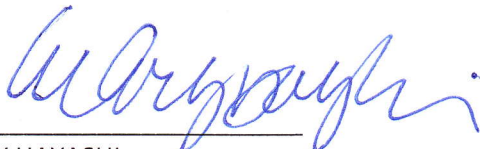
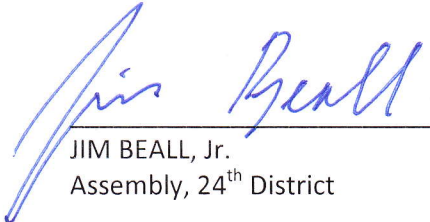
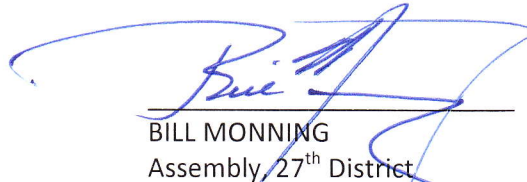
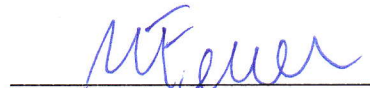
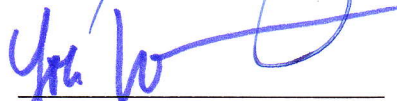


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