



ALLIANCE FOR NUCLEAR RESPONSIBILITY

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ALLIANCE VICTORY IN DIABLO CANYON CASE: JUDGE REJECTS PG&E'S BID FOR NUKE RELICENSING DOLLARS

Nearly two years after the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility (A4NR) filed to oppose PG&E's premature request for license renewal funding for its Diablo Canyon nuclear plant, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has ruled, granting the Alliance's motion to dismiss the application. The case hinged on the need for PG&E to complete the advanced seismic studies recommended by the California Energy Commission (CEC) under AB 1632 (Blakeslee-SLO).

"PG&E has known all along what our state expected them to do, and has flaunted those orders, wasting time and money in the process," adds Rochelle Becker, A4NR's executive director, who is pleased with the ruling. "We'd already know by now whether the seismic footing at the Diablo Canyon site was secure. Instead, it took the unavoidable public scrutiny that arose after PG&E's San Bruno explosion and the Fukushima meltdowns to shed light on their inaction."

Throughout the proceedings, A4NR built its case on the failed history of the CPUC in exerting proper regulatory oversight in seismic matters at California's nuclear reactors. Notes A4NR outreach coordinator David Weisman, "When the CPUC granted PG&E their original funding permit in 1967, nobody checked or verified the seismic assertions made by PG&E or the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), and as a result, ratepayers later forked over billions of dollars for costly seismic retrofit blunders at the reactors. We can't afford that again."

At one point in the multi-year proceeding, The Utility Reform Network (TURN) and the Division of Ratepayer Advocates (DRA) at the CPUC proposed a settlement agreement, which would have reduced slightly the dollar amount requested by PG&E. A4NR protested the settlement. "What good is it to save the ratepayers \$5 million on the relicensing cost if it removes the need for PG& to complete the seismic studies? In the wake of Fukushima and our nearly bankrupt state budget, relying on nuclear energy for another 20 years without a full knowledge of the seismic risks is a sure path to economic catastrophe."

PG&E had countered with a request to simply "suspend" the proceeding indefinitely, but the administrative law judge disagreed, stating, "With a final seismic studies report expected in December 2015, there is no reason to keep this proceeding open. PG&E would have us suspend this proceeding until it completes its advanced seismic studies, but offers no substantial reason to suspend rather than close this proceeding." A4NR's Becker concludes, "This step by Judge Barnett shows consumers that the CPUC is making strides to protect ratepayers in post-San Bruno, post-Fukushima world. We can now focus on making sure the seismic studies are well designed and independently peer reviewed at every step of the way."