



PO Box 1328
San Luis Obispo, CA 93406
(858) 337-2703
(805) 704-1810
www.a4nr.org

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Contact: David Weisman (805) 704-1810 Rochelle Becker (858) 337-2703
david@a4nr.org Rochelle@a4nr.org

California energy policy leader John Geesman to lead legal intervention in CPUC nuclear proceedings on behalf of the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility

On this anniversary of the devastating 1994 Northridge earthquake, the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility hopes to “shake out” the complacency of state regulators and utilities by announcing the retention of veteran energy policy leader John Geesman as legal counsel in their proceedings before the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). Mr. Geesman’s long career in energy policy includes having been executive director of the California Energy Commission (CEC) during Jerry Brown’s first term as governor, serving as a commissioner on the CEC, former chair of the California Power Exchange, past board member of the CAISO, and a prominent opponent of PG&E’s defeated Proposition 16 in 2010.

The Alliance is currently intervening in PG&E’s request for \$64 million in ratepayer funding for seismic studies at Diablo Canyon—an increase of \$47 million over their initial proposal. Questions have been raised regarding not only the cost, but also the merits of the scope of the study. Mr. Geesman concludes, “The fact that the CPUC staff could recently rubber-stamp Southern California Edison’s proposed seismic studies for the San Onofre nuclear plant without review by any seismic experts shows what we’re up against.”

In the wake of the San Bruno gas explosion and revelations about the CPUC and PG&E’s negligent oversight, these concerns are justifiably magnified when addressing California’s aging—and seismically vulnerable—nuclear reactors. “San Bruno was tragic,” comments Alliance outreach coordinator David Weisman, “San Bruno *plus* radiation would be catastrophic.”

Geesman finds a worthy ally in the Alliance, noting that, “More than any other organizations working on nuclear issues, A4NR is focused on forcing the California government to do its job. I want to help them do that.” Alliance executive director Rochelle Becker is equally enthusiastic about the partnership, stating, “Nobody finds the dry rot in our regulatory system more effectively than John Geesman, and it is an honor to have him represent us.”

Testimony and hearings for PG&E’s seismic funding case at the CPUC get under way in February.

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