

AJ Sabath
New Jersey Building and Construction Trades Council

Testimony Before The
Board of Public Utilities
BPU Dockets numbers ER20080557, ER20080558, & ER20080559
February 1, 2021

My name is AJ Sabbath and I'm here today representing the New Jersey State Building and Construction Trades Council, representing over 100 local unions of Electrical Workers, Iron Workers, Laborers and Pipe Trades, comprising more than 150,000 men and women. The Council represents thousands who have been employed at the Salem and Hope Creek nuclear plants in various capacities, especially during maintenance and refueling outages.

I am here today to support the extension of the Zero Emission Certificate program support for Salem and Hope Creek plants.

New Jersey's nuclear plants are an enormous part of the state's energy industry and provide a reliable foundation for the state's businesses and low-carbon economy. The Salem and Hope Creek nuclear plants provide enough 24/7 energy to power 2.8 million New Jersey homes – amounting to nearly [40% of the electricity generated](#) in the state.

Our state's nuclear plants provide a livelihood for 1,600 direct employees. And twice a year, when a nuclear plant shuts down for refueling and maintenance, as many as 1,000 more contractors are brought in to do this important work – most of them New Jersey Building tradesmen & -women. In addition, the plants support several thousand more jobs and benefits in the communities in and around Salem County, which has struggled in recent years as many other large employers have closed.

The recent effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have added significant economic and financial pressures on millions of Americans, with rippling effects reaching all New Jerseyans, particularly those who live in already-struggling communities and counties.

Prior to March 2020, the U.S. economy was enjoying its [longest expansion in recent history](#). It had been 11 years since the Great Recession; New Jersey had recovered [all of the jobs lost during the collapse](#) and was continuing to grow at a steady rate. Then the pandemic struck. In a matter of weeks, all of the gains of the past decade were lost, with COVID-related unemployment reaching levels not seen since the Great Depression a century ago.

While the State continues to tackle the ongoing COVID challenges, there are immediate steps we can take to stimulate and protect New Jersey's recovery from the coronavirus.

One step we can take to protect New Jersey's economy during the pandemic is to continue to support the state's nuclear power plants. Nuclear power is an economic engine for New Jersey

– supporting thousands of jobs, and protecting the environment and public health – all while helping to keep everyone’s utility bills low.

If New Jersey’s nuclear plants were to close for any reason – removing huge amounts of clean, reliable energy from the marketplace – the laws of supply and demand tell us that energy costs are sure to go up.

The State needs a sustained and diversified mix of generation resources that can respond to the growing demands and needs of its customers. If New Jersey’s nuclear plants were to retire, that would leave the state almost entirely dependent on one energy source – natural gas – to generate electricity. We can’t afford to lose this valuable baseload generation in our generation mix.

The environmental qualities of the Salem County nuclear plants are the most cost-effective source clean energy we haven, especially when compared to other renewable resources in the State, and, as compared to other carbon-free resource programs in the region, like New York and Connecticut.

Under Gov. Phil Murphy, New Jersey is working toward ambitious goals as a national clean energy leader. New Jersey Building Tradesmen & women are rightfully proud of their contributions to the state’s green economy and its clean energy efforts. But we won’t be able to achieve those goals without the carbon-free, pollution-free electricity that nuclear provides.

As New Jersey works to recover from the economic damage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, let’s do everything we can to ensure that nuclear as our baseload power is there to support the state’s business community, workforce and energy consumers. The best way to ensure New Jersey’s nuclear plants keep operating is to extend the existing Zero Emissions Certificate program.

Thank you for your time.