



Stabilize the current energy portfolio and promote reliability by keeping Illinois' nuclear plants open.

Climate Jobs Recommendation

Illinois must stabilize its current energy portfolio, including keeping Illinois' six nuclear plants operational in Clinton, the Quad Cities, Braidwood, Byron, Dresden, and LaSalle. This can be achieved by including the Braidwood, Byron, Dresden, and LaSalle nuclear plants in the zero emission standard (ZES) program and adopting the Fixed Resource Requirement (FRR) process– or a similarly process that allows the nuclear fleet to remain competitive in future capacity auctions. Currently, only the Clinton and Quad Cities nuclear plants are included in the ZES and receive zero emission credits (ZECs), which compensate for the environmental benefits of carbon-free energy generation. The Illinois Power Agency awards ZECs and requires utilities to purchase those ZECs ([Lexology, 2018](#)). All utilities receiving ZECs created by the State of Illinois should also be required to disclose the appropriate financial information to the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) to ensure the program continues to be both accountable to ratepayers and necessary to allow Illinois to meet its clean energy goals.

Background and Details

To prevent a rise in carbon emissions, Illinois must keep its nuclear plants open. Illinois' nuclear fleet consists of six nuclear plants containing 11 reactors. Illinois currently ranks 1st in the nation in electricity generation by nuclear power, with 12.4 gigawatts of generating capacity from these six facilities ([EIA, 2020](#)). Nuclear power also accounts for 54% of all electric power consumption in Illinois. Furthermore, the state's six nuclear plants account for 12% of all U.S. nuclear power generation ([EIA, 2020](#)). However, in August 2020, Exelon announced plans to close the Byron and Dresden nuclear plants in the fall of 2021. Retiring all six nuclear plants would increase CO₂ emissions by 60 million metric tons each year as the lost energy is replaced primarily by fossil-fuel-based sources, such as coal and natural gas, primarily from out-of-state– which is equivalent almost 13 million cars ([Murphy & Berkman, 2019](#); [Berkman & Murphy, 2016](#)).

A Pro-Worker, Pro-Climate Illinois

Nuclear power is vital to limiting carbon emissions, combatting pollution, promoting reliable and affordable electricity, creating stable good-paying careers, boosting economic activity, and supporting local communities in Illinois. The state's nuclear power plants boost the Illinois economy by \$3.9 billion annually and directly employ more than 3,800 workers in stable careers paying well over \$100,000 per year in wages and benefits ([IMPLAN, 2020](#)). By providing reliable, in-state electricity production, the six nuclear plants also save or create an additional 24,000 jobs and contribute \$150 million in total state tax revenues ([Murphy & Berkman, 2019](#)). Their local impact is even more important. For example, the nuclear power plant in Byron alone employs more than 700 workers and contributes \$36 million in local property taxes– the most of any property in the United States outside of New York– which supports public schools, public services, and public infrastructure investments in Ogle County, Illinois ([O'Neil, 2018](#)). Nuclear power must be promoted as an emissions-free pillar of electricity production and economic activity in Illinois.