

The Waynesboro-Washington Watch

The WWW caravan was organized by residents living near Plant Vogtle nuclear power station to bear silent witness to the injustice of the power plant expansion, to the danger to the public from a dangerous nuclear reactor design, to the escalating costs of nuclear power, and to the failure of the regulatory agency to heed its own experts following last year's nuclear meltdown in Japan. The bus traveled from Waynesboro, Georgia to Washington, DC, driving all night, taking residents of Shell Bluff and other concerned citizens to the Federal Courthouse on Constitution Avenue. We pray the court will see that justice is done.

THE VOGTLE AP1000 LEGAL CASE

On the morning of November 19, 2012, the US Court of Appeals held oral arguments on a nuclear power case brought by public interest groups.*

The case centers on the failure of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to apply the recommendations from its Fukushima Task Force to Plant Vogtle, operated by Southern Company, and the AP1000 nuclear reactor, built by Westinghouse. In legal terms, the Fukushima study presents "new and significant information" that could alter the environmental analysis for Vogtle 3 & 4 and the severe accident precautions for the AP1000 design.

After the nuclear power plant disaster in Fukushima, Japan in March 2011, the NRC appointed a high-level Task Force to investigate the significance of the accident for nuclear plants in the United States. After the investigation was done, the NRC adopted the Task Force's recommendations which call for significant changes in nuclear power safety requirements. The changes would improve: 1) risk analysis for earthquakes and floods, 2) protection of the reactor and its cooling systems during major accidents, and 3) emergency planning for

accidents involving more than one nuclear reactor. In fact, the NRC agreed to review its entire regulatory framework.

However, on Feb. 9, 2012, nearly a year after the Fukushima accident, the NRC decided by a vote of 4 to 1 not to require these safety precautions at Plant Vogtle Units 3 & 4. The lone dissenting vote came from then-Chairman Gregory Jaczko who said, "I cannot support issuing [the Vogtle 3 & 4] licenses as if Fukushima never happened." Clearly, the disaster in Japan provided a warning. Why was it ignored?

The outcome of the case will also affect other communities where Westinghouse AP1000 nuclear reactors are planned. Many of them are running into problems:

1. Tennessee Valley Authority's Bellefonte plant in Alabama has been delayed for an indefinite period pending resolution of construction costs,
2. In Florida, construction costs for two units at Progress Energy's Levy County plant have ballooned from \$6 billion to \$24 billion since 2006,
3. In South Carolina, construction costs for the proposed William States Lee power station have tripled Duke Energy's estimates and could now exceed \$20 billion.

Preparations for earthquakes, floods and emergency evacuation at nuclear power plants in the United States are inadequate. We cannot stand by while the NRC permits this injustice to endanger the people of Shell Bluff, Georgia, the Southeast and the world.

*Petitioners are Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League and its chapter Concerned Citizens of Shell Bluff, Citizens Allied for Safe Energy, Center for a Sustainable Coast, Friends of the Earth, Georgia Women's Action for New Directions, North Carolina Waste Awareness and Reduction Network, Nuclear Information and Resource Service, Nuclear Watch South, and Southern Alliance for Clean Energy. The attorneys representing us are Diane Curran, Mindy Goldstein and John Runkle.

Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League

www.BREDL.org 3417 Sutton Place Augusta, Georgia 30906 (706) 772-5558 cutley@paine.edu