

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

Congress targets nuclear power construction

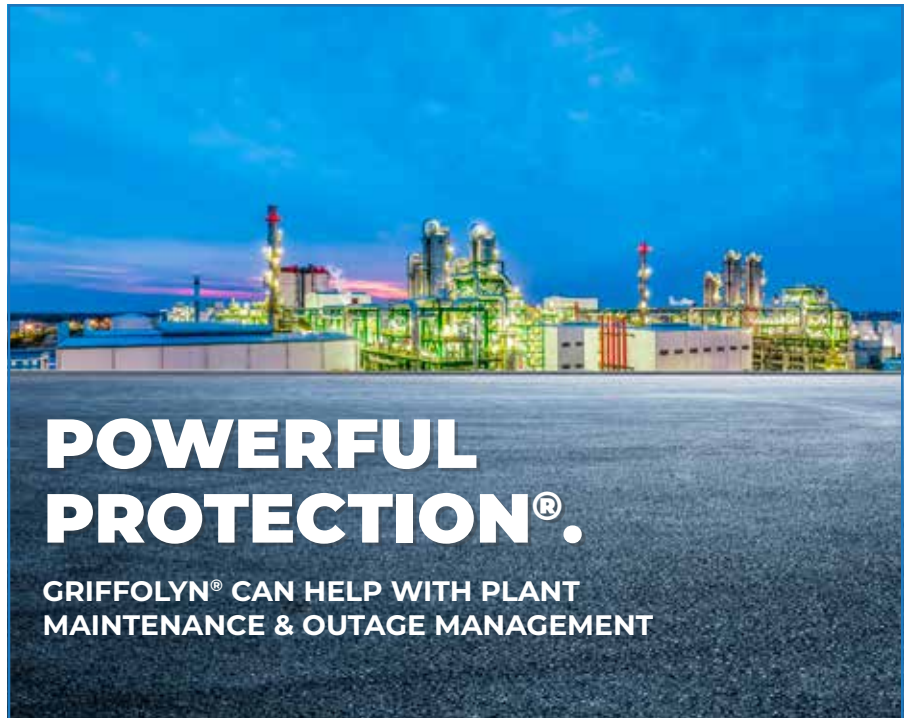
Lawmakers in Congress introduced four bills this spring on different aspects of nuclear construction: the Build Nuclear Act, Nuclear Rate Stabilization Act, RECHARGE Act, and Enrichment Licensing Modernization Act.

The bipartisan Build Nuclear with Local Materials Act would require the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to allow the use of commercial-grade concrete and steel in non-safety-related structures at nuclear power plants and areas not directly exposed to radioactive material. The bill also would allow the NRC to require nuclear-grade materials on these non-safety-related structures if it is determined that stricter standards are necessary to address a specific safety risk or ensure public health and safety.

Lawmakers said advancements in reactor designs have made nuclear-grade concrete and steel unnecessary for certain aspects of nuclear facilities construction, such as in non-safety-related components. Shifting away from nuclear-grade construction materials to commercial-grade materials where feasible and appropriate would reduce costs and speed up deployment.

“As nuclear technology evolves, our regulations should evolve with it,” said sponsor Sen. Cynthia Lummis (R., Wyo.). “Requiring nuclear-grade materials in parts of a plant that have nothing to do with safety drives up costs and locks out local construction crews who are more than capable of doing the job.”

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