

ILLINOIS

Lawmakers pass legislation recognizing nuclear's value

The Future Energy Jobs Bill offers credit for clean air generation and supports two nuclear plants slated for closing.

On December 1, the Illinois Legislature passed the Future Energy Jobs Bill (SB 2814) by votes of 63–28 in the House and 32–18 in the Senate, ensuring the continued operation of two nuclear power plants—Clinton and Quad Cities—in the state. Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner then signed SB 2814 into law on December 7 at Riverdale High School in Port Byron, Ill. “When this legislation was originally drafted, it was a Christmas tree loaded with special interest goodies that would have skyrocketed energy costs on families and businesses across the state,” Rauner said at the bill signing. “So we needed to find a balance, because I was unwilling to gamble with these communities, gamble with thousands of good-paying jobs, and gamble with our energy

diversity. While this legislation isn’t perfect, it allows us to protect jobs, ratepayers, and taxpayers.”

The Clinton and Quad Cities nuclear plants provide about 23 percent of Illinois’s zero-emissions electricity but were set to be shut down by owner Exelon if the state did not enact a solution to value nuclear energy for its zero-emissions quality and economic contributions. SB 2814 amends a number of current state statutes, including the Illinois Power Agency Act, the Public Utilities Act, the Illinois Procurement Code, and the Energy Assistance Act. It sets forth a zero-emissions standard, benefiting nuclear power plants as well as other zero-emissions energy sources, and provides that the Illinois Power Agency Renewable Energy Re-



Photo: NRC

Clinton: Along with Quad Cities, the plant was saved from shutdown by the signing into law of Illinois’s Future Energy Jobs Bill.

sources Fund will be used to purchase renewable energy credits and create a program with solar incentives. The bill also allows for the qualification of renewable energy credit facilities located in other states, if and when resources are not available in Illinois. In addition to benefiting the nuclear industry monetarily, the bill changes a discretionary goal for utilities to a mandatory goal of creating 200 jobs for “persons who are or were foster children and persons with a criminal record.”

SB 2814 was filed by Sen. Don Harmon (D., Oak Park) with the secretary of the state Senate on February 17, 2016, and passed to the House in April. Amendments to the bill were recommended by both the Senate and the House and referred to the necessary committees (either the Rules or Energy committee) for review and recommendation. Throughout November and December, both committees recommended approval of all amendments proposed to them, pushing the bill closer to final approval. The final steps were taken on December 1, with the House and Senate both passing the bill, before Gov. Rauner gave his official approval six days later.

The bill in its entirety can be found on the Illinois General Assembly website at <www.ilga.gov> with a search for bill number SB 2814.