

Amongst the benefits of voting in favor of House Bill (HB) 2410, the one I wish to emphasize the most is the impact of technological and societal development as a result of a successful demonstration of small modular reactor (SMR) technology. Scientists and engineers have come a very long way from when nuclear science was first developed just around a century ago. With every development and test for peaceful applications, humanity largely benefited from utilizing and improving nuclear technology. Today, SMRs are at the forefront of safe and effective nuclear science. Back in 2022, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission approved an SMR design from the company NuScale, making it the first approved SMR to meet the very strict US regulatory standards, and more designs are sure to receive the approval of nuclear experts. SMR demonstrations such as this, should HB 2410 pass, promote public confidence in nuclear science and encourage the newest generation of scientists and engineers to apply their skills for a better future.

To address some of the concerns raised by those who oppose this house bill, the most pressing point of issue is waste disposal. Everyone who favors and opposes this bill agrees that safe storage of nuclear waste is important. The environmental and biological impacts of poorly stored radioactive waste are not lost to anyone, and it is with good reason this point has been made. While this bill does not lay out a specific plan for waste storage, it would be a catalyst for this critical conversation, just as it has brought out the topic from Oregonians everywhere. As public opinion and international government interests shift toward using nuclear technology every passing year, how we approach our waste storage becomes increasingly vital. Perhaps with enough interest, we may begin to pursue a nuclear fuel recycling approach, which would not only reduce the amount of nuclear waste the United States produces but also deplete some of the waste currently within our country. France and the United Kingdom have already demonstrated this as a viable option. Perchance Italy, too, will follow, seeing as they recently announced plans to approach nuclear power again.

To address historic concerns, no one is downplaying what occurred at Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, or Fukushima, as recent examples of danger with nuclear technology. Nuclear history holds numerous examples of carelessness and misuse with this technology, and we are vividly aware of the consequences. Humanity has also tremendously benefitted from careful study of nuclear science, such as developing medical technologies as well as producing incredible amounts of energy while lowering the cost to make it. If we continue to be good stewards of this technology, no doubt many problems may be addressed, such as our climate crisis and growing energy demands. This is not to downplay what alternative and clean energy sources have achieved, such as solar and hydropower. Rather, it adds another tool at our disposal to approach the challenges of tomorrow.