

# Testimony on Senate Bill 215

Chair Sollman, Vice Chair Smith, and Committee Members,

I'm Dirk Dunning, a retired professional engineer with 25 years at the Oregon Department of Energy overseeing Hanford cleanup and nuclear policy. I speak today in opposition to Senate Bill 215.

## Respecting Oregon Voters' Clear Decision

In 1980, Oregon voters established clear requirements before nuclear power facilities could be sited in our state:

- A permanent high-level nuclear waste repository must be in operation
- The people of Oregon must approve any nuclear facility through a public vote

This law reflects the prudent judgment of Oregonians that nuclear power carries unique, long-term risks requiring special safeguards. While SB 215 does include a referral to voters, it attempts to override the requirement for an operational waste repository—effectively asking voters to reverse half their previous decision without fully addressing the underlying concern.

## Informed Consent Requires Complete Information

Any referral to voters should ensure they have complete information about:

1. **Economic Viability Concerns:** Small Modular Reactors require massive upfront capital with 8-10+ year construction timelines. With limited commercial insurance and shifting financial risks to the public, these projects face high likelihood of becoming stranded assets.
2. **Emerging Energy Alternatives:** Fusion energy is approaching commercial viability within this decade. Companies like Helion have already signed power purchase agreements with delivery expected by 2028-2029, potentially making SMRs obsolete before completion.
3. **Climate Timeline Realities:** SMRs cannot address our immediate climate crisis. Climate science indicates we need significant clean energy deployment this decade, while SMRs' lengthy licensing and construction timeline makes them ineffective for timely climate action.
4. **Modern Security Vulnerabilities:** The Russian-Ukraine war has demonstrated how drone swarms can overwhelm traditional defenses. Nuclear facilities require perfect security over their 60+ year lifespans against rapidly evolving threats.
5. **Waste Repository Status:** The bill seeks to remove the waste repository requirement when no permanent repository exists in the United States, despite decades of effort and billions spent.

## **Recommendation**

I urge the committee to:

- Maintain both requirements established by Oregon voters in 1980
- If proceeding with a referral, mandate a comprehensive, balanced analysis by the Oregon Department of Energy to inform voters
- Include clear conflict-of-interest provisions for any analysis
- Require complete economic, safety, and alternatives analysis

Oregonians deserve to make fully informed decisions based on current technological, economic and security realities—not partial information or industry projections.

Respectfully submitted,

Dirk Dunning