

**Commonwealth
Coalition for
Democracy and Safe
Energy**

Beyond Nuclear
Cape Downwinders
Citizens Awareness
Network
Clamshell Alliance
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Nuclear Information &
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Warheads to
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In alliance with:

Greater Boston
Physicians for Social
Responsibility
Mass. Power Forward
Sierra Club,
Massachusetts
Chapter

For more information:

Citizens Awareness
Network:
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Clamshell Alliance:
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Nuclear Information and
Resource Service
www.nirs.org

April 2026

Dear Senator;

The **Commonwealth Coalition for Democracy and Safe Energy**, a statewide organization of environmental groups (see sidebar), **urges the Senate to reject any attempt to repeal Chapter 503 of the Acts of 1982** [Chapter 503]. Chapter 503 is not a moratorium on nuclear power; it sets responsible and reasonable guardrails on the development of nuclear power to protect our communities both environmentally and financially.

Chapter 503 of the Acts of 1982 contains the following preconditions for building and operating any new nuclear power facility here:

► **Certification by the General Court that:**

- 1. A federally licensed facility for permanent disposal of high-level radioactive waste is in operation.**
- 2. Adequate emergency preparedness and evacuation plans are in place.**
- 3. Effective emission standards have been promulgated to protect the public against the safety hazards of radioactive air pollutants.**
- 4. Federally approved means for decommissioning are in place.**
- 5. The proposed nuclear power plant offers the optimal means of meeting energy needs.**

► **Approval of a majority of voters in a statewide general election.**

PRESCIENT, NOT “OUTDATED”

The Governor characterizes the 1982 law as “outdated.” On the contrary, the law was written with an understanding of the nuclear industry’s incentives to prioritize profits over public health coupled with a lax regulator, as true today as it was then. As Dr. Gordon Thompson of the Institute for Resource and Security Studies said in a March 2026 analysis of the Governor’s desire to repeal Chapter 503: *“These conditions are not onerous. A nuclear industry that is well run, socially responsible, and properly regulated...should be able to satisfy these conditions easily. Sadly, however, the actual nuclear industry of today has none of these characteristics.... [T]he voters in 1982 had a grasp of nuclear power issues that remains valid today. They were notably prescient on some key points.”*

UNLIKE ANY OTHER POWER GENERATION SOURCE

Governor Healey also urges the Legislature to repeal Chapter 503 on the grounds that nuclear power should be treated like any other power source. This sounds reasonable but fails under scrutiny. Nuclear power is unique; no other power source creates huge amounts of ionizing radiation and leaves us with waste that must be isolated from the environment for 10,000+ years. In addition, nuclear power has a unique federal regulatory structure that pre-empts state protections.

► **Radioactive emissions - contamination and cancer:** All reactors release radionuclides during standard operation and contaminate land, air, and water. It can take decades for radiation effects to become apparent, making it easy for nuclear proponents to obscure how damaging ionizing radiation really is.

- The Pilgrim Nuclear case study published recently by Harvard documents that **rates of cancer increase the closer one lives to a nuclear power plant**, echoing two earlier state findings of statistical significance for cancer near three nuclear sites in the state.

► **Radioactive waste: a forever-toxic security risk:** After 60 years, the federal government has failed to establish permanent repositories for this waste, leaving hundreds of millions of curies of used radioactive fuel out in the open in steel-and-concrete casks near the six reactor sites in or near the borders of Massachusetts.

- **These casks are not well secured, making them “pre-deployed radiological weapons.”** (Union of Concerned Scientists et al.) A drone-launched missile could cause a release of radionuclides on par with the Fukushima disaster, making the surrounding region uninhabitable for hundreds of years.

► **Regulatory pre-emption of states’ control over radiological safety and licensure:** Only the federal government is empowered to set radiation safety standards. States may exert regulatory control in determining the need for power, siting decisions, emergency preparedness, air and water quality, and non-radioactive contaminants. Massachusetts needs to maintain the legal basis for its right to protect our citizens that is embodied in Chapter 503.

- **The Trump administration is aggressively undermining regulatory oversight and loosening safety standards.** The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is now a shell of its former self; it has lost 500 staff, including many senior managers. Further, the administration has issued guidelines that curtail public input while increasing allowable levels of radiation exposure. According to the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists (November 2025), some experts are saying that *“the effects of the possible new limits could range from ‘undeniably homicidal’ to ‘catastrophic’”*

CARBON EMISSIONS, AFFORDABILITY, AND SMALL MODULAR REACTORS

The Governor states that nuclear power belongs in the state’s energy portfolio because it is not carbon-emitting, and “advanced nuclear” is safer and less costly than older generations of reactors. Both statements are false.

- Nuclear reactors themselves emit little carbon, but the entire fuel chain (mining, milling, etc.) is a net carbon emitter. And people suffer from contamination and disease at every step of this cycle. Any attempt to separate reactor operations from their entire fuel cycle is purposely deceptive.
- The Governor champions Small Modular Reactors. SMRs are experimental and untested. They do not exist, except on drawing boards. They have no track record of safety, nor any firm costs parameters. We do know they will create more toxic waste with no long-term disposal solution.
- **This hurried rush toward SMRs begs many unanswerable questions.** Will they actually help with affordability? No nuclear power plant has been built within its projected timeline or costs, and nuclear power has the highest levelized cost of energy. How many are needed to meet climate goals? Where would they be sited? Where will the water to cool the reactors come from? Are your constituents willing to have an SMR and its radioactive waste dump in your community?

There are more sustainable energy sources than nuclear ready to go to scale right now. They are a better investment than a radioactive hypothetical offered by an industry with a history of cost overruns and contamination, in a deteriorating and dangerous federal regulatory climate.

The New England governors recently made a “commitment to ensuring local voices shape decision-making” and to “fostering public trust and support” in the development of new nuclear technologies. (<https://tinyurl.com/governors-nuclear-2026>) We agree that the people who would bear the brunt of any radiation releases and increases in consumer costs should have real power in the decision whether or not to re-introduce nuclear power. **Leaving Chapter 503 in place shows your commitment to citizen voice in decision-making and is essential to fostering public trust.**

For the Commonwealth Coalition for Democracy and Safe Energy,

Deborah Katz, Rowe

Ann Darling, Easthampton

Susan Mirsky, Newton

Christopher Nord, Amesbury

Diane Turco, Harwich

Shel Horowitz, Hadley