




**National Rural Electric
Cooperative Association**

A Touchstone Energy* Cooperative 

Glenn English
Chief Executive Officer

June 9, 2011

The Honorable Jeff Bingaman
Chairman, Senate Energy Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member, Senate Energy Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators:

On behalf of over 900 not-for-profit electric cooperatives serving consumers in 47 states, I am writing to respond to a false and, frankly, demeaning statement made by the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) at your June 7, 2011 hearing regarding S. 512, the Nuclear Power Act of 2012. The UCS, without any foundation or apparently any facts in hand, asserted that electric cooperatives would be inexperienced or unsafe operators of Small Modular Reactors (SMRs). In fact, cooperatives successfully and solely operated two of the first small reactor demonstrations in the nation – the Elk River reactor in Elk River, Minnesota, and the Lacrosse Boiling Water Reactor in Genoa, Wisconsin. Moreover, electric cooperatives own shares of nine nuclear plants in eight states, totaling 2,710 MW of generation. In many cases, cooperatives have experienced staff on site at those plants and are members of the management teams that operate the facilities.

In Edwin Lyman's testimony on behalf of the UCS, he states:

UCS is also concerned that reducing safety and security requirements for SMRs could facilitate their sale to utilities or other entities in the United States and abroad that do not have prior experience with nuclear power. Some SMR vendors argue that their technology is well-suited for deployment to remote areas, military bases, and countries in the developing world that have relatively low electric demand and no nuclear experience or emergency planning infrastructure. In the United States, for example, a rural electric cooperative might be interested in replacing an old coal-fired plant with a small nuclear plant. As another example, high-temperature gas-cooled SMR vendors are marketing reactors to the chemical industry worldwide for the production of process heat. However, SMRs << File: GE letter re coops and smrs.docx >> deployed in this manner would raise additional safety, security and proliferation concerns compared to their deployment by experienced nuclear utilities. (emphasis added)

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Mr. Lyman has no grounds to imply that electric cooperative deployment of SMRs raises safety, security or proliferation concerns beyond those raised by deployment by investor-owned utilities with whom electric cooperatives frequently partner. The regulations, safety and licensing requirements set forth by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) apply equally to all nuclear operators. And, electric cooperatives have experience operating nuclear generation successfully – as well as natural gas, coal, hydropower, wind, solar, and biomass generation. I can only speculate, therefore, that the UCS does not believe that people in “rural” areas are as effective in engineering and business as people in urban areas, or that they do not believe that not-for-profit, consumer-owned businesses are legitimate. I am disappointed that the UCS used their invitation to your hearing on this important topic to distort the Committee’s understanding of electric cooperatives.

To update you on current activities among electric cooperatives – Oglethorpe Power Corporation has 30% ownership of the Vogtle 3 and 4 reactors in Georgia. They are the first new nuclear plants that will be built in the nation in several decades, with help from a loan guarantee from the Department of Energy. And, thirteen generating and transmitting cooperatives from across the country are members of the Babcock and Wilcox mPower consortium that is seeking to deploy its first SMR by 2020. Cooperatives will continue to seek safe, affordable and reliable generation options for their consumers. As such, electric cooperatives support your efforts through S. 512, the Nuclear Power Act, to make licenses for SMRs a reality.

Thank you for your consideration of these facts and do not hesitate to call on me or my staff with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Glenn English", written in a cursive style.

Glenn English