

Kentucky Senate approves nuclear power bill

FRANKFORT—A bill that would lift a long-standing moratorium on nuclear power plants in the state, was approved today by the Kentucky Senate.

Senate Bill 89 would amend Kentucky Revised Statutes to change the requirement that facilities have means of permanent disposal of nuclear waste. Instead they would only be required to have a plan for its safe storage, and that the plans be approved by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

It would also eliminate several other obstacles to the construction and maintenance of nuclear facilities.

The bill is sponsored by Sen. Danny Carroll, R-Paducah.

“Lifting the nuclear moratorium in Kentucky is no longer a regional issue. It is, without question, a statewide issue,” said Carroll, the latest to introduce the bill – it has passed a Senate vote several times in recent years.

With 99 reactors running in 30 states and a handful being built, Carroll said Kentucky is surrounded by states taking advantage of advances in nuclear energy.

“It has never been more important that we start looking to diversify the energy portfolio in our state,” Carroll said.

“When you run a business, you look for varied funding streams. You don’t put all your eggs in one basket... That’s what we’re doing in our state. Out of fear of nuclear energy, out of efforts to protect the coal industry, whatever the case may be, we are putting all our eggs in one basket.”

“We will left behind if we don’t take action. Soon,” he added.

Other changes proposed with the bill include giving the Public Service Commission authority to hire consultants to perform duties relating to nuclear facility certification.

The bill, in earlier iterations, has received significant attention in the western part of the state where many were out of work when the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant closed in 2013. The facility produced enriched uranium for the U.S. Department of Energy for 50 years before closing.

SB 89 now heads to the House for consideration.