

# “Nuclear Relapse”

*by Eric J. Epstein\**

PPL has announced it can cure global warming and make America energy independent. The problem is that the numbers don't add up, and our cars don't run on uranium pellets.

PPL wants to build a new nuclear reactor, but needs a federal subsidy of \$4.5 billion or 80% of the projected cost of the project. This “nuclear loan” is guaranteed by the U.S. Treasury (that is - taxpayers); and the real cost, based on overruns in Florida and Texas, is actually \$10 billion! Which begs the obvious question: Why aren't the shareholders of one the “best managed” and “most profitable utilities” (*Forbes Magazine*, December, 2007) assuming the risk for a multi-billion dollar slam dunk?

PPL's operating nuclear plants were projected to cost \$2.1 billion, but cost overruns resulted in a \$4.10 billion price tag for rate payers, who will also be treated to a \$32.5% rate increase on January 1, 2009. Don't be fooled again by the same people who brought you electricity “to cheap to meter.” Ask your friendly nuclear power plant to answer four questions:

## **1. Nuclear waste:**

The Susquehanna Steam Electric Station (“the SSES”) produces 60 metric tons of high-level radioactive waste per year. This is nuclear garbage without a forwarding address sitting in a swimming pool in your backyard. The SSES is home to hundreds of tons of spent fuel on the shore of the Susquehanna River which empties into the Chesapeake Bay. Not an ideal nuclear waste site.

When is PPL going to solve the problem they told us not to worry about 30 years ago? Think about it: Would you buy a house from a developer who promised to install a sewer line 30 years after you began flushing?

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## **2. Greenhouse gases:**

Nuclear fuel production in America creates chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). The enrichment of uranium in Kentucky releases large amounts of CFCs which are more damaging as a global warmer than carbon dioxide. CFCs remain the primary agent for stratospheric ozone depletion. The production and importation of chlorofluorocarbons was banned as part of a global treaty (the Montreal Protocol; 1987), and by the federal government (Clean Air Act amendments; 1990). CFCs were supposed to be phased out, but the chemical can still be used until supplies run out.

From the moment uranium is mined, milled, enriched, fabricated and transported it releases large quantities of airborne pollutants. What is PPL's plan to cut its nuclear greenhouse gas emissions?

## **3) Water use:**

Communities and ecosystems that depend on limited water resources are adversely affected by the SSES which draw 40 million of water a day and returns the back wash at elevated temperatures. Last fall, 53 counties were placed on "drought watch, " including Luzerne County where the SSES is moored. Yet PPL is exempted from water conservation efforts. Should nuclear power plants continue to be exempt from drought restrictions?

## **4. Cost of fuel:**

The price for uranium ore rose every month in 2007 peaking at \$120 a pound. Nuclear fuel, which currently sells for \$74 a pound, is predicted to crest at \$95 later this year. This was the same "low-cost" fuel that sold for \$7 a pound in 2001. America imports 84% of its nuclear fuel from "dependable foreign allies" like Russia and Kazakhstan as well as Canada and Australia (when their mines aren't flooded). Why is PPL transferring a foreign oil dependency for an expensive, foreign nuclear fuel dependency?

Memory is a funny thing: It only works when activated. It's your wallet. It's your river. It's your backyard.