

Mr(s). President,

I am of course writing to you in a time of crisis as we face a nightmare so awful that no one in this administration dared to consider it a possibility. Yet here it is, a disaster that should have been avoided, one that has caused at least nineteen deaths and shaken the confidence of our nation to its very foundation. We, as Americans, face an enormous challenge to our entire economic system and moral beliefs, but we also find ourselves at a moment of opportunity. And you are the one who will be held responsible for its outcome.

Therefore I maintain that it is *imperative* that this moratorium on the construction of four new nuclear plants does not come to fruition.

As the head of a nation and the unofficial leader of the free world, it is your nonnegotiable duty to inspire confidence. During this time of crisis, all eyes are on you, and the worst course you could possibly take is to go back on your political platform and promises. The meltdown at the Lohman plant poses its greatest problem in that it may instill an irreversible fear of nuclear power in the American people that is currently unaffordable. You were elected because the American populace is ready for an energy plan that can free us from the crippling, unsustainable dependence on foreign oil. Remind them of that.

In this time of crisis, Americans are confused and upset, and they desperately need to rally around a cause. The meltdown has shown that there are real dangers associated with nuclear power, and now is your opportunity to display that these risks are relatively minor and reparable when compared to the precariousness of an energy platform dependent on foreign oil.

The worst has already happened. It is true that you own this crisis, and there is no point in trying to change or deny that. The best course of action is for you to accept both the disaster and a miraculous recovery that eventually must be associated with it. The tragic nineteen casualties need to be treated as nineteen American heroes. I recommend getting testimony from family and/or friends of the deceased declaring their continued support for an independent, safer, and greener America brought about by nuclear power. We are already on the path that the people wanted, and now it is too expensive to change course. The nuclear option will result in greater security and stability, all things considered, and since you convinced them of that the first time around, you need to do it again.

It will undoubtedly help if you put things into perspective. Your critics are calling this a second Chernobyl, but you should point out that the initial death toll here is less than half the size of the Ukrainian disaster, and more importantly, our evacuation and containment efforts are ten times greater, faster, and ultimately more effective. And if you compare these casualties to those caused each year by the oil and gas industry, the findings are actually quite hopeful for our case. According to the Externe European energy study, coal kills 15 people in the U.S. for every terawatt hour of energy produced, whereas the death rate for nuclear power is only 0.04 per TWh. These statistics suggest that by switching 2000 TWh of America's energy allowance from coal to nuclear, 30,000 lives will be saved over 10 years (not to mention the countless lives lost in the Middle East during wars fought with oil as an ulterior motive).

Proponents of nuclear power have always said that nuclear will work because we have no other choice, and that is especially true now. Not only is nuclear power an economically feasible option at this point, it is the *only* economically feasible option. Granted, investor confidence is probably at an all-time low, considering the recent disaster, but that is nothing we cannot fix. Loan guarantees, subsidies, and other federal incentives have already proven successful in the march toward the development of nuclear plants. And basic laws of supply and demand dictate that there will always be money in the nuclear option due to the scarcity and inefficiency of alternatives. Whereas the Lohman meltdown has created a temporary but fixable financial conundrum, the proposed moratorium would throw us into a prolonged crisis of Depression-era proportions, or worse. At best, our oil and gas reserves could buy us a month, during which time we would need to formulate a backup plan. But when you take all the inevitable lags associated with such an energy overhaul into account, such as political gridlock, construction of new facilities, and the sheer amount of time it would take to formulate a feasible alternative, a month is essentially nothing.

Without the nuclear option we would invariably be sent crawling back to foreign oil. OPEC, like any ambitious and powerful monopoly, would almost certainly exploit the situation in its favor. America's oil addiction would be even more humiliatingly apparent to the rest of the world, and the backbone of our economy would once again be placed in the hands of a few people who want to make the most money out of it as possible. A spike in oil prices could easily leave us in a state of financial paralysis, with transportation and power costs increasing, raising prices exponentially in every market sector. Economic meltdown leads to insecurity, and the last thing we need is to be dependent on oil from nations fraught with real terrorist threats at a time when we lack financial and military strength to combat them. Cost estimates for the wars in the Middle East range from \$1000 to \$3000 billion, dwarfing the estimated \$280 billion in damages from the Lohman disaster, which was an improbable and isolated incident. And when weighing internal threats to national security, we have already seen that nuclear power results in fewer deaths than coal and oil even when such large-scale disasters infrequently occur. After taking into account the social and political instability that ensues during times of economic stagnation, the oil and coal alternative appears to be a volatile and downright irresponsible one.

Finally, I think it is worth stressing that nuclear power, no matter how much better of an option that oil and coal, is still just a means to an end. Oil spills, carbon emissions, and nuclear meltdowns are universally detested phenomena, reminders that no matter how much progress we make toward a safer and cleaner world, perfection has yet to be attained. Nuclear power will allow us to be self-sufficient, safer, cleaner, and cheaper, but it is merely the lesser of two evils in this case. In the meantime, we just need to recognize the dangers associated with nuclear power, accept them as the better alternative while trying to minimize them, and continue the charge toward a more perfect solution.

Sincerely and hopefully,

Edgar L. Walters
United States Secretary of Energy