

**Guest columnist Ann Darling:
Backroom deals and false climate solutions**

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FILE - This March 18, 2003 file photo shows the Millstone Nuclear Power Station in Waterford, Conn. Owners of the facility said they still want more than a study of the facility's future economic viability to ensure the plant remains open and continues providing more than half of Connecticut's electricity. They contend state lawmakers, who have been meeting behind closed doors during the summer of 2017 to hammer out a budget deal, must take prompt action. (AP Photo/Steve Miller, File) Steve Miller—AP

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By ANN DARLING	Published: 10-01-2024 4:35 PM • Letter to the Editors
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Buried in Section 73 of Gov. Maura Healey’s supplemental 2024 budget is an interesting little tidbit, a new definition of “clean energy generation.” In this bill, clean energy now includes, among other things, “nuclear power generation that is located in the ISO-NE control area and commenced commercial operation before January 1, 2011.” Anything included in the formal definition of clean energy can be used to meet state requirements on the utilities for contributing to the state’s climate goals.

This “nuclear as clean” echoes language that was in the climate bill that failed to pass during the formal session of the Legislature that just ended. The language about nuclear power was inserted at the last minute and was challenged by several local legislators. The part about “power generation located in ISO-NE and older than 2011” simply means that Massachusetts utilities could purchase electricity from only two nuclear power plants: Seabrook, just over the state border in New Hampshire; and Millstone, on Long Island Sound in Connecticut. The supplemental budget amounts to a long-term subsidy of these aging, troubled facilities.

Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont really wants Massachusetts to buy Millstone power. He needs help with a problem of drastically increased electric rates that came along after he signed off on subsidies for the Millstone plant. It’s a quid pro quo for staying in a multistate offshore wind project with Massachusetts and Rhode Island. In other words, this is state policy-setting by backroom dealing, from the first inclusion of nuclear in the state climate bill to interstate politics.

Nuclear power is not clean. It is absolutely filthy. Even though relatively little carbon is emitted at the power plant, the nuclear fuel chain (mining, milling, refining, processing, transporting, etc.) is a net carbon emitter — way more than wind, solar, hydro, etc.

Nuclear power and its associated industries poison our air and water with radioactivity as part of standard operations, not just when there are accidents. This poison causes cancers, birth defects, stillbirths, and premature death, among other things. You just don’t hear about it because there’s some really good marketing going on.

But just ask the Havasupai tribe, the Navajo Nation, the Western Shoshone, or Barnwell, South Carolina and Beatty, Nevada, all devastated by radioactive waste. Nuclear power is a false solution to climate change and should never even be in the same thought with the word clean. Learn more about the facts of nuclear power at nukebusters.org (Citizens Awareness Network), nirs.org (Nuclear Information and Resource Service), and beyondnuclear.org. Call and write your legislators today to tell them to strike any language that means nuclear power can help us reach our climate goals. Better to spend that money on truly sustainable, far cleaner options like solar, wind and hydro.

Ann Darling lives in Easthampton.