Nolan Willis

I have a few comments regarding this proposed legislation.

First off, the NRC's licensing process already has extensive requirements concerning siting, safety, placement, evaluation, public comment, and so forth. The NRC is the agency in the United States that has the most experience evaluating reactor placement and designs. Because of this, is there any real necessity or benefit for the State of Alaska, which has nearly zero experience with the same, to have its own processes for evaluating the siting and placement of nuclear reactors? I don't think this is necessary or beneficial. As far as permitting is concerned, I think all the State and local authorities need to do is approve a given site once the NRC approves it without adding complications, opportunities for more public comments, or any other additional requirements. NRC licensing is one of the highest regulatory standards in the world to clear, and any project that gets approval from the NRC can provide reasonable assurance of safety and integrity by virtue of that fact alone.

Second, nuclear power is the future. How else are we going to obtain enough reliable energy to sustain our quality of life without adding forty billion tonnes of CO2 to the atmosphere every year? Some people are resisting this future, but we should not let a vocal minority have a disproportionate chance of derailing nuclear projects just because they do not like them or because they have a fear of the same. A functional liberal democratic society does not work like that, and we have enough problems with issues that were decided by vocal minorities because they were able to exert enough political pressure on elected officials and the resto of society to get their ways.

Instead of going down the regressive path of civic obstructionism, what we ought to do is put proposed nuclear projects up for public vote in which the affected individuals in the projects' respective boroughs are given opportunities to vote against nuclear projects that only and specifically affect them. To halt a project, a two-thirds majority of registered voters at the local level should be necessary to veto any proposed project that has otherwise been approved by the NRC. Thus, for a project that is proposed in the Fairbanks North Star Borough, only the residents of that Borough should be allowed to vote against the proposed project, and if voter turnout is such that opposing votes amount to two thirds of registered voters or more from that locality, the project dies. Otherwise, the project should be allowed to proceed. In other words, absent overwhelming opposition from local voters, projects should be allowed to proceed just as all other industrial projects are allowed to proceed.

Third, despite what some people are saying, the worldwide safety record of civilian nuclear reactors (including the worst accidents) is still considerably better than the safety record for the fossil fuel industries. There is only one high profile nuclear power generating incident that has ever happened in North America, and that killed nobody. By comparison, when Deepwater Horizon blew up, it killed 11 people and spilled over three million barrels of oil into the environment. Construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline resulted in 32 construction fatalities, and there have been a number of injuries and serious environmental incidents since its installation, including the eleven-million-gallon Exxon Valdez oil spill that practically wiped out an entire commercial fishery for the better part of a decade. The oil industry has always been controversial in Alaska, but we tolerate its existence, warts and all, because of the benefits that oil provides. There is no sense in

treating Nuclear projects with a higher degree of scrutiny when objective evidence demonstrates that the nuclear industry is probably the safest industry in the Western world.

Finally, we have some choices to make. Are we going to continue to burn oil, gas, and coal to satisfy our energy needs while continuing to add intermittent renewable energy resources to the mix, hoping that they will displace more and more fossil fuel generation and asymptotically approach a zero-carbon solution? This is what Germany has been doing for the past two decades, and the numbers are in. Germany, right now, has the highest electricity costs in Europe and the highest carbon footprint. By contrast, France obtains about three quarters of its electricity from nuclear power, and they have one of the lowest carbon footprints in the industrialized world and relatively inexpensive energy. We do not need to do our own experiment when Europe already did it for us. If we want low or zero carbon energy, nuclear is the only obvious path forward.