



Interfaith Creation Care Of the Triangle opposes [Senate Bill 730, the Ratepayer Protection Act](#). It's clear that the promise to protect ratepayers as reflected in the title of this bill, would not be fulfilled. Indeed, it would have the opposite effect.

Although the bill takes some initial and incomplete steps to address data center impacts, it fails to address the biggest threats data centers pose. Even more concerning are the threats to ratepayers in Sections 8 of the bill endangering North Carolina's 2050 carbon neutrality goals and in Section 10 requiring that a large nuclear plant must receive approval before any coal or gas plants are closed.

Section 10 of the bill, prohibits the retirement of obsolete coal and gas plants until a certificate has been issued by the NC Utilities Commission for a large nuclear facility, even if retirement is at the request of the utility.

- Instead of protecting ratepayers, this bill would lock North Carolina into dirty and expensive energy sources for decades to come, leaving ratepayers on the hook for paying for stranded assets. Clean solar, wind, and battery storage are far cheaper, and even new gas plants are cheaper than nuclear.
- Nuclear energy is currently much more expensive than renewable energy and will continue to be costlier than sustainable energy sources. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the levelized cost of energy for advanced nuclear power was estimated at \$110/MWh in 2023 and forecasted to remain the same up to 2050, while solar PV estimated to be \$55/MWh in 2023 and expected to decline to \$25/MWh in 2050. Onshore wind was \$40/MWh in 2023 and expected to decline to \$35/MWh in 2050 making renewables significantly cheaper in many cases.
- Ratepayers would pay even more for a new nuclear plant because S266 (passed last year) allows Duke Energy to pass along building costs to customers before plants are finished. Long delays are common as costs rise dramatically over estimates. A plant could be built but never used

with ratepayers paying off the debt for an unused facility, as has happened in other states.

- The bill will delay NC from meeting our carbon emissions goals by 2050 causing much greater harm and suffering to citizens than expected now and greater harm to our beautiful environment.

The provisions of this bill would saddle ratepayers and our State with dirty and extremely expensive sources of energy to decades so ICCT calls for the the removal of Section 10.

Section 8 of the bill states that “an examination of various utility policies should be conducted to ensure these policies are not exacerbating affordability issues for citizens of the State...”. However, the inclusion in the examination of “the 2050 goal for a reduction in carbon dioxide (CO2) emitted in the State from electric generating facilities that results in carbon neutrality, pursuant to G.S. 62-110.9...” endangers the 2050 carbon neutrality and is unacceptable. This 2050 goal is important to North Carolina’s contribution to the future health of God’s creation, and ICCT calls for Section 8 removal.

Provisions of the bill on Data Centers leave ratepayers and communities unprotected:

- Even though the bill allows for a site assessment of the impact to air quality and groundwater and surface water resources, the bill does not require one, leaving the rate payer unprotected.
- The bill does not require upfront disclosure of the chemicals that will be used in data center cooling systems nor does it prohibit the use of PFAS or its discharge into municipal sewer systems and North Carolina’s rivers.
- The bill allows contracts with electric utilities to prevent ratepayer impacts but contracts could be designated confidential, preventing transparency.
- There are no requirements for data centers to “bring their own power.” S730 calls for a study of the concept - but other states are moving forward with this protection now.

Although this bill has some modest measures to address the threats of data centers, when it’s considered in its entirety as written, it’s a bad bill for NC ratepayers, for the NC economy, and for the environment.

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