

# Obama Sells Out Human Health and the Environment By Making Nuclear Energy a Centerpiece of Climate Policy

By [Washington's Blog](#)

Global Research, August 04, 2015

[Washington's Blog](#) 3 August 2015

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Environment](#), [Oil and Energy](#)

In-depth Report: [Climate Change](#)

Obama has made nuclear energy a [centerpiece](#) of his climate push.

In reality, nuclear is [NOT a low-carbon source of energy ... and funding nuclear crowds out the development of better sources of alternative energy.](#)

Mark Jacobson – the head of Stanford University’s Atmosphere and Energy Program, who has written numerous books and hundreds of scientific papers on climate and energy, and testified before Congress numerous times on those issues – [notes](#) that nuclear puts out much more pollution (including much more CO2) than windpower, and 1.5% of all the nuclear plants built have melted down. Jacobson also [points out](#) that it takes at least 11 years to permit and build a nuclear plant, whereas it takes *less than half* that time to fire up a wind or solar farm. Between the application for a nuclear plant and flipping the switch, power is provided by *conventional* energy sources ... currently 55-65% coal.



No wonder a former Commissioner for the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission [says](#) that building nuclear plants to fight global warming is like trying to fight global hunger by serving everyone caviar. More information [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

Zoe Loftus-Farren [explained](#) in the New Republic in January

The EPA’s proposed power-plant regulation provides a carbon credit to states for maintaining nuclear energy production at current levels: in other words, a carbon subsidy for maintaining the nuclear status quo. Following the release of the draft rules, EPA administrator Gina McCarthy made clear that the credit is

meant, in part, to help the struggling nuclear industry. “There are a handful of nuclear facilities that, because they are having trouble remaining competitive, they haven’t yet looked at re-licensing,” she [said at a roundtable discussion](#) with business leaders in Chicago. If nuclear energy plants begin closing, she warned, “It’s a lot of carbon reduction that needs to be made up for a long period of time.”

Maintaining nuclear power production at current levels isn’t the EPA’s only goal. “Nuclear power is part of an all-of-the-above, diverse energy mix and provides reliable baseload power without contributing to carbon pollution,” the EPA said in a emailed statement. “Nuclear power from current and future plants can help the U.S. meet its goals.”

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Why is this worrying? In the fight against climate change, anything is better than dirty coal, right?

For starters, nuclear energy isn’t clean. Although nuclear fission is itself a low-carbon process, the **lifecycle carbon cost of nuclear energy production is anything but, with greenhouse gas emissions stemming from uranium mining, milling, processing, enrichment, and transportation, not to mention the years-long—sometimes decades-long—process of actually constructing nuclear reactors.** “From our perspective, the longstanding problems with nuclear waste, nuclear nonproliferation [and] safety really set nuclear apart from other low carbon energy sources,” says Matthew McKinzie, director of the Natural Resources Defense Council’s Nuclear Program.

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Rather than prop-up a struggling industry, the Obama administration, and whichever administration follows, should eliminate nuclear from its all-of-the-above energy arsenal, relegating it to the category of dirty energies that, if we don’t curtail now, will leave future generations cleaning up our environmental mess.

The odds of a melt-down at a U.S. nuclear power plant are [higher than you might assume](#).

And even a little radiation can be [very harmful to your health](#). And [see this](#).

Postscript: The Onion [parodies](#) Obama’s climate plan by pretending that it:

Creates \$500 tax credit for homeowners who install rooftop nuclear reactors

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