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## ICYMI: "Florida Should Unleash Its Limitless Nuclear Potential"

WASHINGTON – Today, Congressman Byron Donalds (R-FL) published the following op-ed entitled, *"Florida Should Unleash Its Limitless Nuclear Potential"* in the *Floridian*. The op-ed seeks to urge fellow Floridians to learn more about the potential applications of nuclear in the Sunshine State.

Read the full op-ed [here](#) or below:

### "Florida Should Unleash Its Limitless Nuclear Potential"

Representative Byron Donalds (R-FL)  
[The Floridian](#) – June 11, 2024

As the Member of Congress that represents Florida's 19th Congressional District, I seek to enable meaningful change by advocating for and advancing the interests of all Floridians and specifically my constituents in SWFL. I'm blessed to say that I'm a proud Floridian, and we as Floridians must be brave and embrace promising opportunities when they come about. Throughout my time in Congress, I've come to realize an intriguing opportunity that could provide substantial benefit to the Sunshine State—that opportunity is for Florida to unleash its limitless nuclear potential.

Truth be known, I'm an unabashedly pro-nuclear Member of Congress. While America should take advantage of all the options in our nation's diverse energy arsenal, I firmly believe that nuclear power should be considered on a level playing field with other energy-generating sources. Meanwhile, I take an energy-agnostic point of view and simply assess technologies based on the overall value such energy sources can provide—objectively speaking. While in Congress, I've learned more about the range of unique benefits that nuclear can provide to the State of Florida, and I encourage my fellow Floridians to challenge their viewpoints and similarly embrace the Sunshine State's nuclear potential.

Thankfully, Florida is already pro-nuclear—as illustrated by the four conventional reactors that operate today at the State's two nuclear power plants. Notably, the four reactors in Florida currently power 2.3 million homes, provide 1,400 high-paying jobs, represent 69.3% of Florida's carbon-free electricity generation, and consistently operate at full capacity 91.5% of the time. Also interesting is the fact that Florida's nuclear facilities don't just generate firm, resilient power—they simultaneously provide countless environmental benefits too.

Specifically, St. Lucie Nuclear Plant is situated on 1,132 acres of land—with 3/4 of the property being natural wildlife habitats (e.g., mangrove swamps, beaches, and marsh) and home to over 180 different birds and animals (36 being endangered or threatened). Florida's other nuclear plant, Turkey Point Nuclear Generating Station, is situated on 17,800 acres of land—with 9/10 of the property consisting of natural mangroves and freshwater wetlands that host over 60 different birds and animals (17 being endangered). Turkey Point is also one of the three major places in the U.S. that the American Crocodile calls home—taking advantage of the power plant's vast network of warm-water cooling canals.

Today, Florida has the 5th most commercially operating nuclear units in the United States—and my number one nuclear priority is to safely keep these baseload power generating units operational for as long as possible. To be frank, there's no excuse to ever shut down a clean, safe, and resilient nuclear power plant prematurely.

To this end, I want to emphasize—there's so much nuclear potential yet to be realized in the Sunshine State.

In addition to deploying more conventional nuclear plants in Florida, there's also great opportunity to deploy innovative advanced nuclear technology. For example, one immediate application of advanced nuclear in the State of Florida relates to natural disaster response. On September 28th, 2022, my constituents in SWFL experienced Hurricane Ian—which was a Category 5 storm that produced dangerous 155 mph winds, a devastating storm surge, and catastrophic widespread damage. Looking back, the deployment of advanced nuclear microreactors could have made a huge difference for my constituents.

These portable nuclear microreactors are small, versatile, and extremely reliable pieces of technology that could be expeditiously deployed to an area impacted by a natural disaster via plane, road, rail, or ship to provide firm electricity and clean heat—two vital necessities for post-disaster recovery efforts. Additionally, nuclear microreactors have the potential to power energy-intensive desalination technologies to provide potable water, and also may power energy-hungry water extractor machines that remove vast amounts of standing storm surge water to expedite the post-disaster recovery process.

By the same token, Florida can also play a leading role in reducing regulatory challenges associated with deploying innovative nuclear microreactors, simply by providing logistical support for dry-run, radiation-free technology deployment exercises to prove out this innovative, first-of-a-kind deployment concept. The potential to deploy portable nuclear microreactors for natural disaster response is endless—if we can get the regulatory atmosphere straightened out. Hence why I introduced the National Strategy to Utilize Microreactors for Natural Disaster Response Efforts Act, which seeks to iron out the regulatory minutia to bring this expedited microreactor deployment concept to life.

In addition, advanced nuclear reactors can provide on-demand, resilient, and clean electricity to diversify the power supply at Florida's 41 military installations. Moreover, there's potential to deploy advanced nuclear reactors to: (i) power military data centers, medical facilities, and high-energy weapon systems; (ii) provide district heat for military barracks; and (iii) generate on-site alternative fuels, hydrogen, and ammonia from excess nuclear heat at military installations, etc.

On top of that, nearly 2/3 of America's potential coal retirements are in four states: Florida, Maryland, Connecticut, and Wisconsin. While I believe Florida should have a diversified energy portfolio, Floridians must be aware of the economic opportunity that may stem from retrofitting retired coal facilities with advanced nuclear technology—and I encourage the State of Florida to join other states that are actively evaluating this realistic possibility. Notably, analogous energy infrastructure is already in place, grid interconnections and electrical switchyards are already built out, water and land rights are already solidified, and many of the tasks, skills, and trades are easily transferable.

Safe advanced nuclear technology also can assist with grid stabilization, through flexible load following capabilities, which in turn can balance out the deployment of spiky, intermittent renewable energy sources. Especially since Florida ranked third in the country in 2022 for total solar power generating capacity, this is a realistic opportunity for Florida to supplement the vast deployment of intermittent solar technology with consistent, energy-dense baseload nuclear power.

Along with firming up energy reliability, the Sunshine State must continue to understand and recognize the potential tax revenue stream associated nuclear activities (e.g., in 2022, GA=\$335,743,694; NC=\$367,501,403; SC=\$1,107,005,447; TN=\$1,027,741,331; VA=\$842,450,286). Such potential tax revenue would benefit Florida by increasing the amount of money available to improve local schools, community infrastructure projects, public services, etc. The State of Florida should also bolster nuclear workforce-related education initiatives and engage with localities to conduct feasibility studies to evaluate the potential of deploying new nuclear technologies.

Plus, unleashing Florida's nuclear potential should have bipartisan agreement from officials at all levels of government—but I want to stress that Florida must quickly follow in the footsteps of other leading pro-nuclear states. For instance, Tennessee recently created a nuclear energy advisory council and allocated \$50 million in funding to support nuclear companies. Virginia also approved legislation to bolster the deployment of small modular reactors (SMRs), created a state-level nuclear innovation hub, and allocated funding to support the growing need for additional nuclear-related jobs. Likewise, North Carolina and Idaho deemed nuclear energy as a "clean" energy resource, Wyoming enacted a law relating to SMR deployment at coal facilities, and Michigan allocated funding to revitalize the shuttered Palisades Nuclear Generating Station. Even Alaska recently adopted regulations to streamline the regulatory process associated with deploying nuclear microreactors. These are just a few examples of unprecedented, bipartisan, pro-nuclear action being taken in states around the country—Florida must not fall behind.

In sum, I urge my fellow Floridians to learn more about the potential applications of nuclear in the Sunshine State. With the immense benefits that nuclear can provide, Florida should be focused on deploying more nuclear energy as a baseload option to add reliability and resilience to the State's energy matrix. The entire nuclear industry and associated nuclear supply chain should also be intrigued by the potential economic opportunity associated with the business-friendly State of Florida. Ultimately, the nationwide nuclear momentum speaks for itself—and I encourage the Sunshine State to follow closely and unleash its limitless nuclear potential.

*Byron Donalds is a U.S. representative for Florida's 19th Congressional District and serves on the House Financial Services Committee and the House Oversight and Government Accountability Committee.*

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