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AARP and Nuclear Power

Among the important long-term subjects of legislation this session are bills concerning nuclear power generation. Senate File 390 and House File 561 propose ways to keep the possibility of nuclear power as a viable option for power generation in Iowa. This option is vital to Iowa's future. The actions of extreme environmentalists and intrusive federal regulations have all but ended the possibility of building new coal-fired power plants in our state. Without this option, Iowans face a future where power demands exceed the ability of current production capabilities. The result is likely to be rapidly increasing costs to consumers and businesses. There is the real possibility of Iowans experiencing rolling brownouts and other power interruptions. Imagine the impact on the economy and our standard of living.

Many of you have heard from the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) about these pieces of legislations. I know because I have heard from you. Unfortunately, AARP is deliberately misleading Iowans about SF 390 and HF 561. I work hard to be informed on this issue, and am compelled to correct the misinformation currently being provided by AARP. Recent ads paid for by AARP imply the legislature is voting to approve a nuclear project and that contains electric rate increases in the legislation. This is not true. Nothing in this legislation increases electric rates or authorizes the construction of a nuclear facility. The legislation also does not alter the traditional role and responsibility of the Iowa Utilities Board or Consumer Advocate in deciding such matters.

If, after continued analysis, a nuclear project is proposed, the Iowa Utilities Board will then make decisions on rates, including whether or not a project should go forward. All the facts will be presented and all interested parties will have an opportunity to participate.

AARP compares this legislation to a situation in Florida that is very different from what is being discussed in Iowa. In Florida, a utility is developing a large-scale nuclear project that is many times larger than the small modular technology being explored for Iowa. Facilities using small modular technology are a small fraction of the price of a large nuclear facility. A comparison between the Florida project and what is being proposed for Iowa is a meaningless and misleading comparison. By spreading misinformation, AARP is being deceptive and doing a disservice to its members.

In the coming months and years, due to multiple new federal environmental regulations, electric utilities will be required to transition to new fuel sources for base load generation or make costly modifications, some of which would be cost-prohibitive to coal facilities. By trying to eliminate the option of nuclear generation, AARP will force utilities to generate electricity with natural gas, the only base load option left if coal and nuclear are removed from consideration.

Natural gas is certainly an important part of the power generation mix. However, overreliance on this fuel source will result in a dramatic increase in demand for natural gas, thus driving up the price of this

already-volatile fuel source. Most Iowa seniors rely on natural gas to heat their homes, and would not be able to afford that type of price volatility.

The proposed legislation has been crafted to include a number of consumer protection measures that demand annual reporting and stringent accountability measures. While reasonable disagreements can be expected over the processes in the Iowa Legislature, the Iowa Utilities Board and the Office of Consumer Advocate, will always keep Iowa's interests and economy at the forefront.

I urge you to ignore the misinformation being spread by AARP on the nuclear legislation. Iowa needs to keep the option of nuclear power in the mix in order to keep control of our electricity prices and continue to advance our economy.

Track what is going on at the legislature by going to <http://www.legis.state.ia.us/> Contact me any time in the Iowa House by calling 515-281-3221 to leave a message, or by e-mail at royd.chambers@legis.state.ia.us Royd Chambers of Sheldon represents House District 5, which consists of O'Brien, Osceola, the rural parts of Clay, and 4 townships in Sioux County.