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Powering the Future: How States Are Shaping the Future of Nuclear

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As interest in new nuclear generation picks up steam nationwide and regulatory reform plays out at the federal level, the states are playing an important role in fostering its development. Some of these states have long-standing ties to nuclear, and some are just beginning to examine – or reexamine – the benefits of nuclear energy. Regardless of their prior experience with nuclear energy, state legislatures and executive branch officials are taking an active role to craft sound nuclear policy for their states. This article briefly explores some of the ways in which states are making nuclear energy a sound resource option for the future.

Financial Support

The simplest and most direct form of state-level support is a financial incentive. In some states, grant efforts like Virginia's Clean Energy Innovation Bank (VCEIB) are taking shape to boost targeted projects, while other states have created large economic development programs. Tennessee, recently named the "epicenter" for new nuclear by the American Nuclear Society, has allocated \$70 million to support nuclear investment in the state, and has announced nearly \$50 million in awards to date. The uses cover a range of purposes, including infrastructure improvements, land transfers, degree, and other workforce programs. Texas created the Texas Advanced Nuclear Development Fund to fund multiple categories of state assistance grants, and has announced the availability of \$350 million to support these programs. These targeted financial initiatives demonstrate how states are leveraging direct investments and grant programs to accelerate nuclear industry growth and position themselves as leaders in clean energy innovation.

Coordination and Facilitation

Another means by which states are showing support for nuclear development is the creation or designation of a state-sanctioned office or body to serve as a coordinator for industry development. In some states, the legislature has created a nuclear-centered state agency tasked with carrying out specific assigned responsibilities. Texas Advanced Nuclear Office (TANEO) and Kentucky's Nuclear Energy Development Authority (KNEDA), for example, consider grant administration as part of their various responsibilities. Kentucky's agency is also responsible for identifying "nuclear-ready" communities in the Commonwealth. In South Carolina, the Governor's Nuclear Advisory Council is a clearinghouse not just for new nuclear policy but for any nuclear industry policy matters in the state, such as those pertaining to the Savannah River Site. In other states, executive action has resulted in the creation of official nuclear bodies. For example, Tennessee's governor designated a long-running working group of the East Tennessee Economic Council as the state's official Tennessee Nuclear Network (TN²), tasked with coordinating among industry, academia, and all levels of government to enable nuclear deployment. In addition to the shared goal of promoting new nuclear, these bodies, and others like them, nationally consist of representatives from state and local government, academia, regional electric utilities, and other stakeholders. These offices and other bodies play a vital role in coordinating government action; brokering discussion between governmental entities and private industry; and clearing the path for recruiting and siting nuclear industry business in their respective states.

State Regulatory Authority

In addition to incentivizing and coordinating tools, states have traditional regulatory options at their disposal to influence the development of nuclear energy. Some states have found ways to incorporate nuclear energy into

their generation portfolio requirements, by adopting technology-neutral clean energy, zero carbon standards or by amending existing standards to boost nuclear generation. In some states, such as New York and Illinois, this effort predates this latest push for new nuclear generation, having originated in the mid-2010s when a wave of plant closures roiled the merchant nuclear fleet. Nevertheless, it provides an important incentive to electric utilities contemplating new generation. More recently, states have sought to encourage rate-regulated utilities to examine new nuclear by permitting cost recovery for the development of new nuclear projects. Some states, such as Virginia and South Carolina, have restricted eligible projects to small modular reactors, while others, such as North Carolina, include no such restriction. Each of these examples demonstrates how state governments, relying on their traditional regulatory authority, help shape the course of new nuclear generation.

Summary

These are but a few of the many actions being undertaken at the state level. Even states that have yet to commit firm resources are rolling out master plans or strategic frameworks to guide development or rely on other instruments of state policy, such as state-owned energy authorities (e.g., New York Power Authority, Energy Northwest), to push nuclear forward. While each state's circumstances are unique, many are harnessing their capabilities to further nuclear deployment, and opportunities for development and growth abound.

Information for Companies Looking to Navigate State Nuclear Policy

- Consider the availability of nuclear-specific or other economic development assistance resources in states where you currently operate or are looking to expand.
- Contact a state energy official, designated nuclear energy coordinator, or other nuclear industry network to help build your local or regional networking reach.
- Connect with state regulatory or energy authorities and monitor their proceedings and other public engagements for news, information, and potential business opportunities.

If you have any questions about nuclear energy policy or regulation, grant or other forms of public funding, or navigating state regulatory processes, please reach out to [R. Culver Schmid](#), [Christopher Chandler](#), and [J. Ashley Cooper](#).