

SINCE IN THE LAST FEW DAYS THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION HAS APPROVED \$1.5 BILLION LOAN TO RESTART PALISADES NUCLEAR, DOES THAT MEAN IT IS OK TO CLOSE AND DEMOLISH THE CAMPBELL PLANT AS SCHEDULED?

Unlike solar and wind in West Michigan, nuclear can as a category provide reliable electric here. At least 2 questions then arise:

1. Does the announced Biden \$1.5 billion loan to restart the Palisades nuclear reactor mean Ottawa County should be ok with the currently May 2025 scheduled closure and demolition of the Campbell plant?
2. Does this trade-off make sense: Campbell plant is closed in May 2025 and Palisades nuclear is being re-opened?

Let's first of all respond with what should be most obvious and agreed upon by all parties: timing. It makes no sense to close and demolish Campbell before its main new replacement (not just purchase of existing facilities by Consumers Energy) on Michigan's grid is operational and safe. It is not clear when Palisades nuclear plant will re-open, but it is doubtful it will be by May 2025. So at the very least closure of Campbell should not occur as scheduled. Indeed, a date should not even be set for its closure, because it is not really known when Palisades nuclear will re-open.

So the above answers the first question, what about the second?

Here are various factors to consider:

1. Trying to bring back to life decommissioned plants like Palisades is very challenging , as explained at <https://manhattan.institute/article/back-from-the-dead-prospects-for-restoring-closed-nuclear-plants-to-operation> . Palisades is one of the few that *may* be worth doing, but my guess is that it is going to be very expensive and have many challenges. The economics of doing it are the exact opposite of simply keeping the Campbell plant open. The article ends with this statement: "... Holtec hopes to surmount the cost concerns with yet more federal subsidies..." In other words, the Government and hence taxpayers are going to be pouring billions of dollars into the Palisades project-money that could have been saved if the Campbell plant were kept open.

2. We should keep in mind why the Palisades closed down in the first place:

"Last month, Whitmer wrote a letter to former Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm and the U.S. Department of Energy to urge them to consider Palisades for a new DOE fund with \$6 billion to bail out nuclear plants on the verge of shutting down...Patrick Dillon, executive vice president of the Utility Workers Union of America, previously told The Sentinel it did not seem likely another company would be willing to swoop in so late in the game to reverse course and pay for the needed upgrades to keep the plant running for another nine years. With more than 50 years of operation, Palisades was one of the oldest running nuclear plants in the U.S." -

<https://www.hollandsentinel.com/story/news/local/2022/05/24/palisades-nuclear-plant-shuts-down-entergy-still-open-buyer/9891633002/>

“...the facility, like many other U.S. nuclear plants, struggled to make money as cheap natural gas gobbled up its share of the electricity market... But on Friday Entergy said it moved the closure up by 11 days after its operators identified a “performance issue” with a mechanical part of the reactor, a control rod drive seal, and “made the conservative decision to shut down the plant early.”- https://www.huffpost.com/entry/palisades-nuclear-power_n_62885060e4b0edd2d015f7c9

So even at the time of closure it did not make sense to keep the plant operating, and one can be sure that the situation has considerably deteriorated since then.

Of course, Holtec is all too willing to take Government money to try to get it back operating, but does it make sense to? Without significant Government subsidy, it most certainly would not. Meanwhile, the Federal Government goes \$1 trillion deeper in debt every few months.¹

This smells like a boondoggle to me. While nuclear energy per se is reliable, given the situation at Palisades, it is doubtful it is reliable or affordable. And given its age and the fact that it was decommissioned, the environmental risks seem problematic too.

3. The owner of Palisades, Holtec, has a long history of illegal activity. Here is what has happened most recently: <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/30/nyregion/tax-breaks-holtec-fine-norcross.html> -

Tax Break Scandal Leads to \$5 Million Fine for N.J. Energy Company

The penalty allows Holtec International to avoid criminal charges after an investigation into tax breaks linked closely to George Norcross III, a powerful Democrat.

So the Federal and State Governments will be paying billions of dollars to a company which recently engaged in criminal activity.

This explains the long history of illegal activity by Holtec:

<https://www.propublica.org/article/holtec-international-george-norcross-tax-breaks> -

A False Answer, a Big Political Connection and \$260 Million in Tax Breaks

Holtec International gave a false answer in a 2014 New Jersey tax break application connected to political boss George E. Norcross III, a Holtec board member. Five days after

¹ <https://www.fxstreet.com/analysis/national-debt-tops-34-trillion-but-so-what-202401041525>

WNYC and ProPublica asked about it, lawyers called it “inadvertent” and asked the state to correct it... the international nuclear parts manufacturer was caught up in a contracting investigation at the federally owned Tennessee Valley Authority. In 2010, Holtec was barred for 60 days from doing any federal business and paid a \$2 million administrative fine to the TVA, [according to an agency report](#). Holtec’s debarment marked the first time the agency had taken such action against a contractor...The TVA case dates to 2001, when Holtec contracted with the TVA to design and build a storage system for spent nuclear fuel. A criminal investigation by the TVA inspector general led to the creation of a formal process to debar Holtec. It was the first debarment in the federal agency’s 77-year history...Norcross has hired a team of well-known lawyers in New Jersey, and they [filed a lawsuit](#) this week trying to block the investigation by the task force appointed by Murphy into the tax break program. Another of Norcross’ brothers, [U.S. Rep. Donald Norcross](#), has received \$18,750 in campaign contributions from Singh, according to federal election records. Singh also loaned \$250,000 to General Majority, a political action committee for which George Norcross raises money...”

What could go wrong? A company with a long history of criminal activity is in charge of re-starting the Palisades nuclear reactor.

4. The revenues generated by the Campbell plant will allow and justify the member-owned cooperative to invest in the very best environmental equipment (even more than the \$1 billion already spent in the last decade on environmental aspects). We live in the area, and we have a vested interest to make sure that plant incorporates the best technology to scrub real pollutants and make sure they are properly managed after scrubbing. We want to make sure that plant’s emissions and by-products are managed in such a way that there are no adverse health effects on the population of any significance. There is technology to make ****real**** pollutants from coal insignificant, as has already been done for the most part.

5. Consumers Energy has not done an optimal job of handling the by-products at the Campbell plant. It has been dumping too much, which is the exact opposite of what should have been done. The by-products could and should be sold for commercial purposes (even if at a subsidized rate from plant revenues) and not dumped. The cooperative can correct that, and it would not be hard to do.

6. I know it is politically incorrect to say, but atmospheric carbon dioxide is not a ****real**** pollutant. Dr. Happer from my alma mater does an excellent job of explaining why: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXJ7UZjFDHU> . But even if one believes that it is, there are still ways to address it, as explained at <https://savethecampbell.com/the-application-of-allam-cycle-technology-so-there-would-not-be-atmospheric-carbon-dioxide-emissions-from-the-campbell-plant/> .

7. Radiation from nuclear is a real pollutant, unlike carbon dioxide emissions from the Campbell plant.

8. Coal is by far the cheapest way to produce electric: cheaper than natural gas and much cheaper than nuclear (especially the nuclear from trying to re-open Palisades plant).

In conclusion, taxpayers and consumers will be forking over tons of money to try to make the Palisades plan happen, rather than just keeping Ottawa County's Campbell plant open as planned until the last several years. This makes no sense. Ottawa County residents should insist that the Campbell plant stays open and try to avoid the negative fallout from Palisades (pun intended).