**Retain the Columbia Generating Station**

**WHEREAS** the Columbia Generating Station (CGS) is a publically owned nuclear facility operated by a Washington State not-for-profit operating agency since 1984, capable of delivering 1,190 megawatts of continuously available power to the grid, sufficient for a million homes, while emitting virtually no greenhouse gases;

**WHEREAS** in 2016a resolution to shut down the CGS was submitted to the State Platform Committee by the Klickitat County Democrats, claiming that the value of the electricity generated is less than the plant’s operating cost, pointing out that there is no national spent fuel storage repository, and that active geological faults in the Puget Sound area are connected to ridges at the Hanford site;

**WHEREAS** said resolution did not consider or even acknowledge any of the positive aspects of the CGS to be mentioned below;

**WHEREAS** said resolution was passed at the 2016 Democratic State Convention in Tacoma as 2016SCRES-143-160618-PASS-ENV, without any opportunity whatsoever for consideration of the following information about the CGS in delegate debate;

**WHEREAS** CGS power is generated at a cost of 3.5 cents per KWh , competitive with natural gas and hydropower, and less expensive than wind and solar power;

**WHEREAS** the greatest part of the spent nuclear fuel from the CGS is safely contained in dry cask storage on site, and the CGS is currently building additional capacity to store thirty additional years’ worth of spent fuel casks, so that the CGS could operate throughout its useful life without a national spent fuel repository;

**WHEREAS** recent evaluations conducted at the Hanford Site[[1]](#footnote-1),[[2]](#footnote-2) for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission are concluding that the CGS facility including the spent fuel storage systems are at very low risk of failure due to credible seismic events;

**WHEREAS** the Nuclear Regulatory Commission was confident enough in the safety and security of CGS operation in 2012 to approve an extension of the CGS’s 40-year license for an additional 20 years, thereby extending operation through 2043;

**WHEREAS** in 2014 the CGS is a significant power source, generating 8.2% of Washington’s power, representing 54% of Washington non-hydro low-carbon power[[3]](#footnote-3);

**WHEREAS** CGS power is continuously available regardless of weather conditions, and is therefore well suited to support reliable power grid baseload and capacity demand, including backing up increasing levels of intermittent renewable wind and solar power;

**WHEREAS** hydro, solar, and wind electricity production is likely to become more dependent on weather conditions, snowmelt, and streamflow patterns, thereby making more important power generation methodologies independent of these factors to support the grid and keep it resilient against failure;

**WHEREAS** shutting down the CGS would likely result in an immediate shift of 8.2% of our power to CO2 power sources such as natural gas to meet increasing power demands while supporting the power grid baseload; potentially doubling the state’s CO2 emissions from natural gas, making attainment of Washington’s greenhouse gas emission goals more difficult, and making Washingtonians pay more in carbon taxes;

**WHEREAS** without carbon-free nuclear power it will be more difficult for the USA to meet the goals of the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate for combatting climate change should said treaty be ratified by sufficient nations to bring it into force;

**WHEREAS** local effects of shutting down the CGS could include the loss to Washington State of up to 1,500 direct jobs and three times that number of indirect jobs;

**WHEREAS** while building a new nuclear power plant may be uneconomic in today’s business environment, shutting down the CGS would be abandoning an investment in a large, continuously upgraded, and successfully operating low-carbon electrical power plant with a thirty-year expected remaining lifetime;

**THEREFORE** **BE IT RESOLVED** that Washington State Democrats acknowledge the CGS as a critical part of low-carbon electrical power generation in Washington State and the Pacific Northwest, for the above reasons; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Washington State Democrats recognize the CGS as a critical facility for combatting carbon emissions-driven climate change;

**THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that the Washington State Democrats urge the Washington State legislature to support the retention of the Columbia Generating Station nuclear power plant through its useful life.

Submitted by the 8th LDDO Nuclear Power Committee to the 8th Legislative Democratic Organization and to the Benton County Democrats August 17, 2016

Adopted by the Benton County Democratic Central Committee and by the 8th LDDO August 17, 2016.

Submitted to the Washington State Democratic Central Committee August 22, 2016.

1. <http://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML1507/ML15078A243.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://adamswebsearch2.nrc.gov/webSearch2/view?AccessionNumber=ML15154B396> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <http://www.eia.gov/state/?sid=wa> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)