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Nuclear to Play Vital Role in Innovating Virginia's Carbon-Free Future

Arlington, VA – Innovations in nuclear energy will play a vital role in reaching Virginia's goal to be carbon-free by 2050 after Governor Ralph Northam signed legislation directing the state to work with industry to develop a strategic plan for the Commonwealth's nuclear industry. The bill, passed by the legislature in March, directs the government of the Commonwealth, through the Virginia Nuclear Energy Consortium Authority (VNECA), to work with industry stakeholders to develop a comprehensive plan for ensuring this carbon-free energy source continues its contribution to economic development and reducing greenhouse gases.

"The nuclear industry is a vital part of the Commonwealth's economy and the Lynchburg region," said State Senator Steve Newman, patron of SB 549. "The strategic plan will drive innovation to support and grow this vital resource for jobs and energy production in Virginia. I look forward to seeing the plan take shape and be put into action in the weeks and months ahead."

Delegate Chris Hurst, patron of HB 1303, added, "It is vital to the future of our Commonwealth that we continue to explore all opportunities for carbon-free energy, including nuclear. House Bill 1303 will allow Virginia to lead on environmental responsibility while remaining a national leader in nuclear energy, by encouraging research taking place at our outstanding universities and new economic development through advanced technology and manufacturing."

The legislation directs the Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy, the Secretaries of Commerce & Trade and Education, the VNECA, and the Virginia Economic Development Partnership Authority to work together to develop a strategic plan for nuclear energy. The plan will spur innovation in an industry already making significant contributions to emission-free energy by providing economic development opportunity, new avenues for education and jobs, and additions to Virginia's manufacturing base.

"We are excited that the legislature and Governor recognize the contribution made by the nuclear industry," said Tom DePonty, VNECA Chairman. "Last year Governor, Northam outlined an ambitious agenda for moving Virginia to 100 percent carbon-free energy by 2050. The strategic plan will help attract innovative new businesses that will help Virginia achieve its goals while helping grow our economy."

With a focus on promoting advanced nuclear technology opportunities for innovation, the plan will drive advanced manufacturing, establishment of a collaborative research center, and creation of a university nuclear leadership program to promote fields that meet the workforce demands of Virginia's nuclear industry.

“Across the country, developments in new reactor designs and fuel technology are leading a resurgence in advanced manufacturing and clean power generation,” said April Wade, Executive Director of the Virginia Nuclear Energy Consortium, a group representing nuclear industry stakeholders and universities across the Commonwealth. “Congress has appropriated \$1.5 billion for nuclear energy programs, including demonstration of technologies like small modular reactors. The strategic plan will enable Virginia to take advantage of opportunities like these and to demonstrate the Commonwealth’s commitment to carbon-free generation, advanced manufacturing, expanded education and research opportunities, and other economic benefits.”

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The Virginia Nuclear Energy Consortium (VNEC) established by Virginia statute in 2013 and created in 2015, seeks to facilitate, encourage and advance the nuclear industry in Virginia through collaboration among industry participants, colleges and universities and not-for-profits in areas of need and interest to its members.. To learn more about VNEC please go to www.virginianuclear.org.