

Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League

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Residents Fight to Bring Case Against Georgia Nuclear Plant Legal Brief Filed June 12

Today the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League announced it had filed further legal arguments in its campaign against safety risks at Plant Vogtle. In reply to Southern Nuclear Operating Company's opposition to BREDL's standing to intervene, the group filed statements from three residents directly affected by the nuclear power plant on the banks of the Savannah River in Burke County.

Rev. Charles Utley said, "I want to voice my opinion on the project in Waynesboro, Georgia. I am a concerned citizen what has taken place in the construction of Plant Vogtle and I want my voice to be heard." For over twenty years, Rev. Utley has been pastor of a church in Shell Bluff, just 10.2 miles from Plant Vogtle.

Richard Colclough said, "I want my voice to be heard concerning the safety of Plant Vogtle." Mr. Colclough is a well-known environmentalist and former county commissioner who lives in Hephzibah, about twenty miles from plant Vogtle.

Claude Howard said, "I live less than five miles from Plant Vogtle and my concern is that the foundation moved. This is more than technical because the surrounding neighborhood that it's built in includes me and many other concerned residents."

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BREDL's executive director, Louis Zeller, also took issue with personal remarks by the company attorney directed at his organization's expert witness, Arnold Gundersen, an engineer with 50 years of experience operating nuclear plants. Zeller said, "Dismissive personal attacks are unwarranted in this forum. Petitioner may disagree on many levels with parties to this proceeding, but there is no citation we can find in the rules of procedure which permit ad hominem remarks."

BREDL contends that, under the guise of a one-inch change in the seismic gap between two critical walls in the Vogtle reactor, Southern Nuclear Company has admitted to a much more serious problem, the "dishing" of the nuclear plant's concrete foundation which creates instability. "Vogtle has finally admitted that the sheer weight of the nuclear island building is causing it to sink into the red Georgia clay," said Gundersen.

The legal action is the latest in a series of such challenges to Plant Vogtle. On May 11, BREDL filed a legal petition requesting a hearing before the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board on a License Amendment for Plant Vogtle's Unit 3.

In February Southern Company requested a license amendment from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, seeking to reduce safety margins by narrowing what it called the "seismic gap" between Vogtle's Unit 3 nuclear island and adjacent concrete structures.

Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League is a grassroots organization with projects in six states. Its local chapter Concerned Citizens of Shell Bluff supported the legal action with necessary affidavits of support.

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The petition and supporting analysis are posted online at <http://www.bredl.org/>