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## **Murtha decision a victory for Vermonters**

The front page headline on the January 20 Burlington Free Press reads, “A Stinging Defeat.” U.S. District Court J. Garvan Murtha’s ruling to allow Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant to continue to operate past the March 2012 contract expiration date is indeed a defeat for the administration of Gov. Peter Shumlin and some legislative leaders.

But for many others in Vermont, the judge’s decision is an encouraging victory. Vermont Yankee has the green light at both the federal and state level to continue operating. The US Nuclear Regulatory Commission already granted a 20-year license renewal to Vermont Yankee after conducting one of the most thorough reviews of a nuclear plant in U.S. history and determining the plant to be safe. Although many specific details about Vermont Yankee’s future remain unclear, its continued operation is good news for Vermonters, including:

- 1,200 workers at Vermont Yankee. Counting employees, contractors, and others employed directly as a result of Vermont Yankee’s operation, more than 1000 people will keep their jobs. These workers will continue to pay school and payroll taxes, pay on their mortgages, support health care providers, and buy local goods and services. They will continue to give generously of time, money, and services to the Windham County safety net. And finally, a workplace that last month was rated by Vermont Business Magazine as one of the best in Vermont will continue to be a magnet for skilled workers, including the state’s young people.
- Ratepayers – both homeowners and businesses. A spokesman for ISO-New England, the region’s transmission grid, said last year that the loss of Vermont Yankee would impact regional electricity rates and reliability, given its crucial role in supplying power and controlling voltage in the tri-state area. Vermont utility customers have saved more than \$300 million dollars over the last ten years because of Vermont Yankee’s existing power purchase agreement with the state. This shows that Vermont Yankee has been a very good deal financially for Vermont.
- Advocates of clean air and water. Both state and federal authorities have consistently given Vermont Yankee high grades in environmental protection. Now that the State is poised to swap Vermont Yankee contract power for short-term contracts with southern New England plants burning fossil fuels, the positive environmental impact of Vermont Yankee becomes even more apparent.
- Vermont’s future energy portfolio. The continued operation of Vermont Yankee provides an additional low-cost, low-carbon, fully-permitted power resource on which state utilities may draw as they build a diversified power portfolio to meet Vermont’s growing need for electricity. According to the Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan, the state’s energy electricity demand will rise even if the most stringent efficiency measures are adopted.

Vermont will need more, not less, clean, safe, affordable, and reliable electricity in the coming decades, and Vermont Yankee can and should play an important role, either directly or through the New England grid.

- Vermont taxpayers. Vermont Yankee contributes about \$15 million per year in local and state revenue. The burden of paying those revenues will not be shifted to already overtaxed individuals and businesses.

Moving forward, the state should heed Judge Murtha's guidance and cut its losses. Much time and effort was put into both the trial and subsequent judgment. It is now crystal clear the state was not being transparent about its real reason for wanting to shut down the plant – safety. True, the state asserted other reasons. But, Judge Murtha, in his ruling, pointed out that the legislative record showed instances “almost too numerous to count ... [which] reveal legislators' radiological safety motivations and reflect their wish to empower the legislature to address their constituents' fear of radiological risk.”

Instead of pursuing superfluous litigation, the state should move forward and find a way to incorporate Vermont Yankee into its future energy plans.

VTEP ([www.vtep.org](http://www.vtep.org)), an educational and advocacy not-for-profit organization promoting safe, clean, reliable and affordable energy, is comprised of more than 90 members, including Entergy, owners of Vermont Yankee.

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