



SIERRA CLUB

LONE STAR CHAPTER

To: The Honorable Craig Goldman, Chair
Members, House Committee on Energy Resources
Re: HB 4047 (Guillen), Relating to a study on uranium deposits in this state.

April 3, 2023

The Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club is not opposed to a study of uranium deposits in the state. However, we would note that all uranium mining is not equal, with legacy mill tailings and strip mines dotting the state which are still being cleaned up. While more modern “solution-mining” through the use of injection wells is a better and less damaging process, those same mines can also lead to spills, aquifer damage and potential for radioactive leaks, spills and contamination.

Our concern with the bill as filed is that it is only a study of the potential for uranium mining areas in Texas, as well as a study of how to provide economic incentives to the mining of those deposits, without any consideration of the potential negative impacts of mining.

Thus, we would suggest the study be accompanied as well by information about potential barriers to uranium’s use due to the presence of potable waters and potentially potable waters in the state. We also believe that TCEQ as the regulator may not be the best entity to conduct the proposed study laid out in HB 4047, and would suggest that the Bureau of Economic Geography might be a better entity.

Some suggested language can be found below.

SECTION 1. DEFINITION. In this Act, "commission" means the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. "Bureau" means the "Bureau of Economic Geology."

SECTION 2. STUDY ON URANIUM DEPOSITS IN THIS STATE. The commission shall collaborate with the Bureau to conduct a study on the location and volume of uranium deposits in this state, whether the deposits

are located in areas that would not impact groundwater or surface waters, and how utilizing those deposits could lessen the United States' reliance on foreign sources of uranium.

SECTION 3. REPORT. Not later than December 1, 2024, the commission shall submit to the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the house of representatives a report that includes the findings of the study and any recommendations for legislative or other action, including recommendations on how to assure protection of groundwater, land and surface water resources. The report must include recommendations for legislative or regulatory changes to protect natural resources and potential economic incentive programs to support the uranium mining industry in this state.