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Governor Youngkin Announces $1.2 Million Investment to Advance Virginia's Leadership in Nuclear Innovation

Grants to Fund New Research Reactor and Advanced Materials Center, Supporting Next-Generation Nuclear Technologies

Richmond, VA – Today, Governor Glenn Youngkin announced $1.2 million in grants to the Virginia Innovative Nuclear Hub (VIN Hub) funding the establishment of critical research infrastructure, support for workforce training, and further positioning Virginia as the nation's leader in next-generation nuclear technologies.

"From our world-class universities and research institutions to our skilled workforce and innovative companies, every aspect of Virginia's ecosystem is aligned to advance nuclear innovation," said **Governor Glenn Youngkin.** "These strategic investments will accelerate our momentum, creating high-quality jobs, strengthening our energy security, and cementing the Commonwealth's position as America's nuclear innovation leader for decades to come."

This initiative is funded through the Virginia Department of Energy's (Virginia Energy) Virginia Power Innovation Program (VPIP) and includes the following projects.

- **Virginia Research & Education Reactor Facility (VA-RERF)—$750,000**
  This planning project will assess the feasibility, design, and implementation strategy for a micro-scale research reactor in Virginia. The facility will serve as a flexible testbed for advanced materials research, reactor simulation, and hands-on nuclear workforce training. The goal is to reduce Virginia's reliance on out-of-state labs and expand in-state capabilities that support industry and academia alike.
- **Virginia Center for Nuclear Materials and Reliability (VA-CNMR)—$462,000**
  VIN Hub will develop a collaboration model for the development of a research center focused on materials degradation in non-aqueous environments—a key challenge for Generation IV reactors. The VA-CNMR will address gaps in materials science, help shape national standards, and support industry efforts to deploy safer, longer-lasting nuclear technologies.

"These initiatives will bolster our efforts to create an ecosystem that attracts federal investment, supports private sector innovation, and builds the talent pipeline needed for the deployment of advanced nuclear technologies," said **Virginia Energy Director Glenn Davis**. "We're the best state in the nation for business and energy innovation, and we intend to keep it that way."

Jeff Whitt, a former Executive from nuclear energy powerhouse Framatome, will serve as VIN Hub's director and oversee the organization's mission of bringing academic, industry, and government partners together to create public-private opportunities to further advance technology projects in the Commonwealth. The hub—funded with an initial seed grant of $350,000 by the Virginia Department of Energy in 2024 as part of the Virginia Power Innovation Program—will implement these projects through a consortium of Virginia's leading universities, including the University of Virginia, Virginia Tech, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Liberty University, leveraging their complementary expertise in nuclear engineering, materials science, and computational modeling.

"I am honored to have the opportunity to promote Virginia's leadership at such a critical time for Virginia and for the global energy transition," **Whitt** said. "Virginia has unmatched capabilities in every aspect of the nuclear energy cycle for both commercial and defense reactors. The opportunity to connect world-class partners, drive new research, and elevate Virginia's role on the international stage is both exciting and deeply meaningful. I look forward to building on the great work already underway."

Dr. Alireza Haghighat, a Vice Chair of the Virginia Nuclear Energy Consortium (VNEC) and Director of the Nuclear Engineering Program at Virginia Tech added, "Virginia has excellent opportunities for students interested in a role in nuclear energy, and VIN Hub will ensure the technologies they work on as students and researchers will be advanced in the state where they were developed. VNEC is a partnership between industry and academia that began in 2013, and creating VIN Hub has been a priority for VNEC's members to expand nuclear research opportunities here in the Commonwealth."

VNECA Chairman Tom DePonty commented, "Virginia is a leader in the nuclear industry, and we are committed to advancing the next generation of nuclear energy in Virginia. It's a great day for the Commonwealth and our energy future."

These initiatives build upon Virginia's existing strengths in nuclear energy, including power plants that generate over 30% of the state's electricity and a robust nuclear supply chain anchored by industry leaders like BWXT, Framatome, Commonwealth Fusion Systems, and Dominion Energy. The funded projects will commence in May 2025, with initial assessments and planning expected to be completed within 12 months.

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