

DeWine, Husted, Moreno seek billions for uranium enrichment in Southeast Ohio

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COLUMBUS, Ohio – Gov. Mike DeWine and Ohio’s two Republican senators asked the Trump administration to reserve a “majority share” of a \$3.4 billion federal investment in uranium enrichment for a company trying to revive domestic production in Southeast Ohio.

In a [letter](#) to U.S. Energy Secretary Chris Wright, they asked that the money, appropriated via two pieces of legislation signed by President Joe Biden, flow to Centrus Energy’s centrifuge uranium enrichment plant in Piketon.

Their letter cites the nation’s reliance on foreign-produced enriched uranium, the fuel that powers nuclear energy. While the U.S. once dominated the market, it’s now led by Russia (which has nearly half the international market), followed by a consortium of European nations, China, France and then the U.S.

“It is critical that the Department of Energy prioritize American-owned and operated projects, such as Centrus Energy’s Piketon plant, when spending these dollars,” the letter states. “[The company’s] work in Ohio improves U.S. national security and advances American energy dominance.”

Centrus since 2023 has operated 16 centrifuges at the American Centrifuge Plant in Piketon, Ohio, which the company [says](#) is the first U.S. owned uranium enrichment plant to start production in 70 years. The “High-Assay, Low-Enriched Uranium” (HALEU) produces an enriched uranium, more refined than the kind that fuels massive power plants. The HALEU is built for smaller scale reactors that could be distributed around the U.S. The company wants to expand, and it’s [licensed](#) to operate about 11,500 centrifuges, which look like skinny cylinders, jutting about 30 feet up from the ground in the massive, airplane hangar-style facility.

Success would have major geopolitical and environmental ramifications. For one, it would revive domestic competition with Russia amid its ongoing invasion of Ukraine. Plus, bringing the plant online at scale will unlock the uranium enrichment

capacity needed to pivot away from fossil fuels and toward a zero-carbon source like nuclear, according to a [white paper](#) on the subject from a clean energy consultancy, Global Health Strategies.

“The need to transition away from Russian nuclear fuel, coupled with a historic investment in U.S. nuclear fuel production approved by Congress, has created a once-in-a-generation opportunity to restore America’s domestic supply chain for enriched uranium,” said Amir Vexler, president and CEO of Centrus, in a [news release](#) after meeting with federal lawmakers last year.

The site at Piketon has an ugly history in terms of human health. Between the 1950s through the end of the century, a gaseous diffusion plant on the same site enriched uranium for the federal government. Fears of a cancer cluster emerged after a cleanup effort on site, which critics say was poorly executed.

A local school board member [began keeping count of students](#) at nearby Zahn’s Corner Middle School who died or were diagnosed with cancer. An epidemiologist, hired by anti-nuclear activists fighting expansion, conducted research warning of present and future exposures to toxic radiation. In 2019, Zahn’s Corner [closed](#) after the school board learned of the presence of radioactive material in the air despite some “inconsistency” among interpretations of the data. State [data](#) shows the county has a much higher age adjusted cancer rate (about 510 incidences per 100,000 people) compared to the state (465) and nation (439), but a variety of factors impact such rates.