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**REP. DUDLEY RESPONDS TO DUKE'S ABANDONMENT OF LEVY NUCLEAR PLANS**

ST. PETERSBURG – This afternoon, Duke Energy announced that they have ceased plans to build a much-maligned nuclear plant in Levy County. This decision comes after cost estimates for the plant ballooned from around \$6 billion to \$24 billion, and the completion date was pushed back to 2024. Because of the controversial nuclear cost recovery clause, customers have already been forced to pay for a portion of the cancelled project. Representative Dwight Dudley (D-St. Petersburg), a vocal critic of the proposed plant, praised Duke's decision. However, he also reminded ratepayers that the fight is far from over.

"I would like to begin by acknowledging the exemplary journalistic work that has been done on the Levy plant story. Ivan Penn's articles in the *Tampa Bay Times* have been especially important in bringing this issue to the public's attention. If not for the tireless efforts of Mr. Penn and his colleagues, the actions of the utility companies would still be shrouded in shadows.

"Duke Energy also deserves some credit for doing the right thing. It took a while, and it cost ratepayers a pretty penny, but I am glad that this failed plant has finally been abandoned. While I have been critical of Duke's new CEO and her recently expressed desire to expand the utility tax, I consider this announcement to be a step in the right direction. Now, Duke can continue to do the right thing by reimbursing ratepayers for the vast sums of money that have already been taken from them.

"I believe that this moment could mark a transition toward coherent energy policy in the state of Florida. The increasing cost of nuclear power and the failure of the Levy plant should prompt our legislature to consider alternative options. However, we cannot allow this victory to cloud our focus. Until the tax has been repealed, once and for all, the utility companies will still have the power to do as they please. Under the current law, they can take as much of our money as they'd like—few questions asked, no end in sight. I will continue to fight until the power has been restored to consumers."

Dudley represents Florida House District 68 in the state legislature, covering portions of St. Petersburg, Pinellas Park, Feather Sound and Lealman.

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