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A banner advertisement for Verizon FiOS. On the left, there is a collage of various people's faces. In the center, the text reads "MORE SATISFACTION" in large red letters, followed by "HDTV THAT BEATS CABLE AND SATELLITE IN CUSTOMER SATISFACTION" in white. Below that, in smaller white text, it says "RVA RESEARCH, JUNE 2009. RESEARCH CONDUCTED FOR THE FTTH COUNCIL, NORTH AMERICA." On the right side of the banner, there is the Verizon logo and a red button that says "Get FiOS".

**Harvey Wasserman**

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Author of SOLARTOPIA! Our Green-Powered Earth

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## \$600 Million Lipstick for a Dead Radioactive Pig

The mystery has been solved.

Where is this "new reactor renaissance" coming from?

There has been no deep, thoughtful re-making or re-evaluation of atomic technology. No solution to the nuke waste problem. No making reactors economically sound. No private insurance against radioactive disasters by terror or error. No grassroots citizens now desperate to live near fragile containment domes and outtake pipes spewing radioactive tritium at 27 US reactors.

No, nothing about atomic energy has really changed.

Except this: *\$645 million* spent on lobbying and media manipulation.

That's a minimum estimate on how much the Nuclear Energy Institute and its fellow reactor backers have spent in the past decade to sell the public on nukes and grab taxpayer money to build them, as compiled by Judy Pasternak and a team of reporters at American University's Investigative Reporting Workshop.

Think AIG and Goldman Sachs gone radioactive.

Think \$64.5 million, just for political arm twisting and media bloviation, *every year* since the coming of George W. Bush.

That's \$1 million per every US Senator and Representative, plus another, say \$100 million for the White House, courts and media.

Noam Chomsky's "manufacturing consent" is now just "outright purchase."

How has National Public Radio become Nuclear Proliferation Redux? Think: corporate sponsorships.

Why does weekend host Scott Simon grovel at Steward Brand's radioactive feet? Count the dollar signs.

How can disgraced ex-Greenpeacer Patrick Moore (who also sells clear-cut forests and genetically modified food) shill for new reactors? Examine the check stubs.

This is not to say all reactor advocates do it for the money. Certainly some have grown on their own to like nuke power.

But \$645 million -- **Six Hundred Forty-Five Million** -- buys a lot of opinion going one way, and suppresses a lot going the other. Op-eds, air time, "independent" reports, phony claims that "green" nukes can solve global warming ... not to mention campaign "donations," fact-finding junkets, political fundraisers, K-Street dinners ... all can be had for a trifling drip from a \$645M slush fund.

The first payback came this week, delivered by Barack Obama. The president promised \$8.33 billion in loan guarantees for two new nukes proposed in Georgia, where two old ones came in at 3000% over budget, and where the Nuclear Regulatory Commission warns the proposed new ones might crumble in an earthquake or hurricane.

As Juan Gonzalez of Democracy Now! points out, Team Obama has taken *very* large chunks of that \$600 million from Chicago's nuke-loving Exelon. Quickly trashing those slick campaign promises for a green power revolution, his first two named advisors, David Axelrod and Rahm Emmanuel, were proud Exelon "associates."

Now the ObamaMafia wants taxpayers to pony up \$36 billion **more** in loan guarantees. (John McCain wants a mere trillion).

All this has gone down *before* the US Supreme Court ruled that corporations are people who can spend without limit to buy Congress and the media. The cash pouring into the pockets of politicians voting for still more taxpayer money to build still more reactors will parallel the gusher of radiation that poured from Chernobyl.

Does this mean the flood of new reactors is inevitable?

NO!

In the face of that \$645 million cash tsunami, grassroots activists still stopped \$50 billion in loan guarantees three times since 2007. No new US reactor construction has started since the 1970s, when public opinion was over 70% in favor of atomic power, and Richard Nixon promised 1000 US reactors by the year 2000.

With green jobs advocate Van Jones ditched and Obama now openly in the nuclear camp, atomic energy is still a loser.

It can't solve its waste problems, can't operate without leaking radiation, can't pay for itself and can't get private insurance against terror or error. Once hyped as "too cheap to meter," Warren Buffett, the National Taxpayers Union, the Heritage Foundation and the CATO Institute are among those joining the Congressional Budget Office in warning that atomic energy is really "too expensive to matter."

The reactor backers will respond with all the hundreds of millions they think they need. But they're still selling a technological corpse. With licensing and construction and the inevitable unforeseen, not one new US reactor can come on line in less than seven years.

A lot can happen between now and then. Most importantly, renewable/efficiency prices will continue to plummet. And grassroots opposition will not stop. As Abe Lincoln reminds us: you can't buy all the people all the time, and the ones that can't be bought, *can* be damn powerful.

Those loan guarantees, those new nukes, all that hype about a returning nuclear age ... they are *not* a done deal. They still must withstand a Solartopian revolution in green technology that has left reactors in their economic dust ... and a human species whose core instincts *demand* economic and ecological survival.

So when you hear some hired gun selling nukes, remember: even \$645 million can only buy so much green lipstick for a dead radioactive pig.

And when Nature bats last, the final score is not about cash.

Harvey Wasserman's SOLARTOPIA! OUR GREEN-POWERED EARTH is at [www.harveywasserman.com](http://www.harveywasserman.com), along with HARVEY WASSERMAN'S HISTORY OF THE US. He is Senior Advisor to Greenpeace USA and the Nuclear Information & Resource Service.