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Commonwealth Coalition for Democracy and Safe Energy

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What: Rally to Keep Democracy Alive/Save Chapter 503

When: Wednesday, September 30, 2026 Rally/Speakers 8:00-10:00 AM

Where: UMass Lowell Meehan Student Center—outside sidewalk area

Why: In 1982, Massachusetts voters, through a citizens petition, required any construction and operation of new fission nuclear power reactors must also include 1) public and environmental protections certified by the legislature and 2) a VOTE of public support.

On September 30, 2026, the Healey administration will host a New England Regional Nuclear Policy Summit with the five fellow New England governors and the National Governors Association to "explore the deployment of next-generation nuclear energy" at this one-day event at UMass Lowell Meehan Student Center. ([See their announcement here](#))

We call for citizens to bring signs and energy to bear witness and keep our democracy alive. Our government is accountable to us, we the people.

Governor Maura Healey has called for the repeal of [Chapter 503](#) as part of her energy policy to promote small modular reactors (SMRs) that are untested and unproven at commercial scale. Proponents also advance the unfounded narrative that SMRs will offer affordable energy and produce meaningful climate benefits now. Affordability deserves evidence, not promises. Proven renewable technologies are already available at substantially competitive costs. ([Energy Bill pages 2-3](#))

The Governor's policy is not just an energy policy shift—it is a direct challenge to the principle that our government derives its authority from the consent of the governed. We will not accept the erosion of our rights, the weakening of public protections, or decisions of this magnitude made without us. The people of Massachusetts established this law to safeguard a vote for our health, our environment, and our future and we stand ready to defend it at the ballot box.

Deb Katz of Rowe states, "In a failed attempt to meet carbon commitments, Governor Healey substituted "clean" for "renewable" to justify nuclear inclusion in her energy legislation. She is intent on rolling back guardrails that protect our communities and ensure a democratic process. With the Trump administration's undercutting safety regulations, these guardrails are more important than ever; we need politicians that protect our rights to determine our energy future, not repeal a 1982 Act that protects us."

Chris Nord of Amesbury explains, "Chapter 503 is not an anti-nuclear law and does not "ban" new nuclear power in Massachusetts. It preserves the right of citizens to make decisions about our safe energy future using the democratic process of our vote. In order to foster public trust, there must be transparency and inclusivity in determining our clean energy policies."

Diane Turco of Harwich continues, "This 1982 public and environmental safety law was not written for a different era. It was written precisely to prevent a moment like this—when a small circle of elected officials, under the influence of the well-funded nuclear industry with their academic partners, might attempt to take the decision out of the hands of the public. The Trump administration has already removed emergency planning, environmental impact statements, and has approved higher allowable public exposure to radioactive releases. And now our Governor is promoting removal of public protections and environmental standards, too? Let's all step up and speak out! We demand a say in our safe energy future. It's the LAW!"

(Bulletin of The Atomic Scientists on new radiation exposure rules)

Ann Darling of Easthampton says, "Before we are asked to commit to using SMRs in Massachusetts, it is the nuclear industry's responsibility to show us—not promise us—that SMRs can be built safely, on schedule, at commercially competitive costs, with responsible waste management and without imposing unreasonable financial risks on ratepayers. The Governor's faith in SMRs is premature at best."

Susan Mirsky of Newton reports, "Members of Mass Peace Action from across the state have expressed concerns about the attempt to repeal Chapter 503. Efforts should be funneled to our cities and towns to the benefit of the people for a sustainable energy policy. We expect our governor to be a voice for the well-being of us all rather than a mouthpiece for the nuclear industry and their profiteering."

CCDSE promotes a clean, green, renewable and safe energy policy for today and for generations to come. Keep democracy alive—let the people decide!

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