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Gore won't commit to nuclear energy
Oscar winner sidesteps question from Inglis on global warming

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GANNETT NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON -- A congressional hearing on climate change starring Oscar winner and former Vice President Al Gore went from theoretical discussions to real world decisions today when Rep. Bob Inglis asked the Democrat if Duke Energy should choose to build a nuclear power plant rather a coal-fired one.

Inglis, R-Travelers Rest, said Duke Energy CEO Jim Rogers had paid him a visit and discussed an upcoming decision about the kind of power plant to build in Cherokee County.

"It's either to build in South Carolina a nuclear plant, which he (Rogers) would prefer to build, or a coal-fired plant which he would prefer not to build. The problem is it is very difficult to get all the (regulatory) ducks in a row for the nuclear plant," Inglis said, noting that 55 percent of South Carolina's electricity is generated by nuclear power plants.

"I wonder if you would agree if part of the answer here is to make it possible for a Duke Energy to build that nuclear power plant rather than to build that coal-fired plant, which is 24-7, 365 days a year going to belch out CO2 (carbon dioxide which contributes to climate change)?" Inglis asked.


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"Is that something we can agree on (to) signal them that there could be bipartisan agreement that they have a future in that nuclear plant?" said Inglis.

Gore, whose "An Inconvenient Truth" documentary on climate change won an Academy Award, was noncommittal.

"I'm not opposed to nuclear. I have deep questions about it. I used to be enthusiastic about it," said Gore, who as Tennessee congressman and U.S. senator had as a constituent the Tennessee Valley Authority, a federal power generator that once planned to build as many as 21 nuclear power plants.

Gore, who declared climate change "a planetary emergency" during the hearing, did not include a resurgence of the nuclear power industry among his suggestions for curbing greenhouse gas emissions. He did recommend banning construction of future coal-fired plants unless they have advanced technology to trap or eliminate carbon dioxide emissions.

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