opinion

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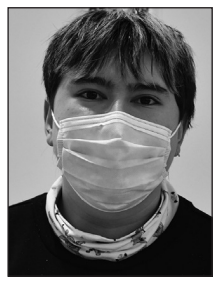
THEBUZZ

Questions asked to you, our readers.

Would you travel to space and why?

"I probably would, but only for a short period of time."

- Jude Lindsay

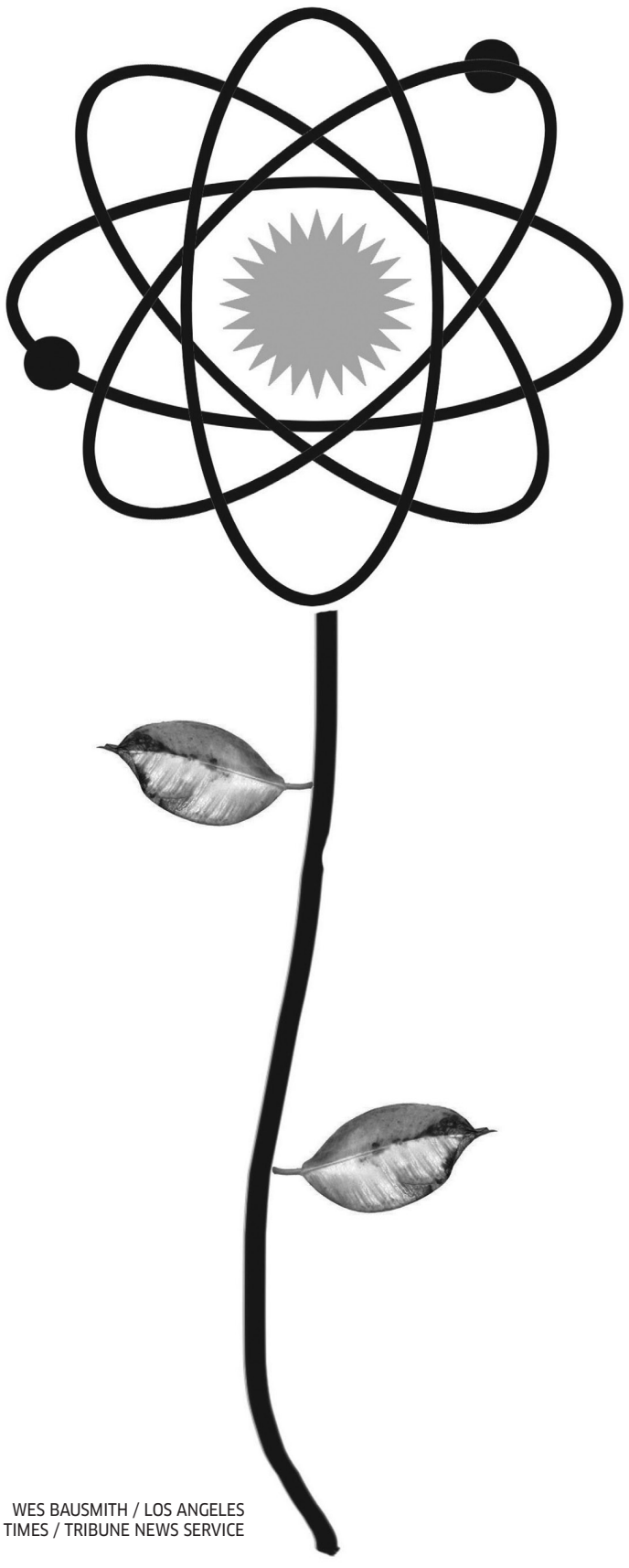


"Probably not because I'm pretty lazy."

- Elijah Lin

"No, I don't think I would because of the unknown long-term health issues."

- Odessa Schwei



WES BAUSMITH / LOS ANGELES TIMES / TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

Making a case for nuclear energy

A clean, abundant and eco-friendly energy source

EBENEZER IDOWU, JR.
Staff Writer

Climate change. Almost everyone living in this country has heard of it, and most agree it is a big issue primarily caused by the buildup of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere through burning fossil fuels. It would seem reasonable, then, to look for other ways to meet the growing demand for energy.

Most people instinctively turn to renewable energy as the solution, specifically solar and wind, but the truth is that solar and wind energy alone cannot replace fossil fuels. They are unreliable; they only work when the sun is shining and the wind is blowing. Plus, they provide a surprisingly small energy output.

If society wants to get serious about renovating our current energy grid to be more eco-friendly, we must find multiple energy sources that, when combined, supply just as much energy as fossil fuels. And the most promising candidate is nuclear energy.

Nuclear energy is clean, abundant and inexpensive, yet many are opposed to it. I will debunk a few myths about nuclear energy to hopefully show that it might not be as dangerous as we make it out to be.

Myth #1: Nuclear energy is unsafe.

While there are risks to nuclear energy, there are also many measures taken to minimize the risk. Nuclear plants undergo strict safety guidelines, including remote handling of equipment, "radiation protection and contamination control procedures" and procedures governing waste disposal. According to Hanna Ritchie, nuclear energy is much safer than fossil fuels, the primary source of energy in the U.S. It causes 99.9% fewer deaths than brown coal, 99.7% fewer than oil and 97.6% fewer than gas.

People who would like to label nuclear energy as dangerous generally refer to two tragic accidents: Chernobyl and Fukushima. However, some context is needed to truly understand these incidents. Chernobyl was a power plant built by the Soviet Union. It badly lacked safety measures, leaving it more vulnerable to an accident. Fukushima, an accident in a Japanese power plant, was partly caused by a nearby tsunami.

While these events truly were tragic, they do not warrant banning nuclear energy. Fossil fuels kill far more people every single year. Rather, such insight should lead to ever more stringent safety regulations, something nuclear plants already implement.

Myth #2: Nuclear energy pollutes the environment.

Nuclear energy involves the splitting of atoms to produce energy. This causes virtually no environmental pollution, making it a "zero-emissions clean energy source." Nuclear energy produces no carbon emissions, making it a wonderful alternative to coal, oil and natural gas, which pump massive amounts of pollutants into the air.

In fact, it is almost equal to solar and wind energy in this respect. (Again, mind the "zero-emissions" part). And to bust another myth: water vapor, not smoke, is pumped into the air from a nuclear power plant.

Myth #3: Nuclear energy produces toxic waste which cannot be safely disposed of.

While the process of splitting atoms does produce a form of waste, various methods exist to manage this waste. One is nuclear recycling. Much of the nuclear waste can be used as fuel for another reactor, reducing the amount that will be disposed of. Moreover, nuclear waste doesn't take up vast amounts of space.

» SEE **ENERGY** PAGE 6

Waterfalls are Wisconsin's hidden gems

LAUREN TAILLON
Staff Writer

Even though Wisconsin is known for being cold and snowy, few can argue with the state's beauty. The nature in Wisconsin rivals many other states with the combination of white sand beaches along Lake Michigan, the vibrant autumn colors, the vast number of state parks with breathtaking views and its majestic waterfalls.

Some people may be surprised to learn that Wisconsin is home to more than 40 waterfalls. While most of those waterfalls are up north, there are a few that are closer to Madison. There are

» SEE **GEMS** PAGE 6

CLARION FILE PHOTO

Parfrey's Glen State Natural Area features a natural waterfall and beautiful scenery that hikers can enjoy.

JOE BURBANK / ORLANDO SENTINEL / TNS

Photographers gather at dawn on launch day for Artemis I at Kennedy Space Center, Florida, on Saturday, Sept. 3. NASA scrubbed the second attempt to launch the moon-orbit test flight after ongoing fueling issues.

Learning to live in space?

I love the space program, but let's focus on our home first

TALEISE LAWRENCE
Assistant Editor

Artemis I is a part of NASA's Deep Space Exploration Systems. It is an unmanned mission that will enable human exploration to the Moon and Mars. This is the first of many missions, which will "provide a foundation for human deep space exploration and demonstrate our commitment and capability to extend human existence to the Moon and beyond," says NASA.

Artemis I was scheduled to launch in August, but had to postpone for safety concerns.

The second time around the launch was scrubbed again because of problems with the rocket. While it was disappointing to many, officials say it will cost less money in the long run to fix the rocket before it launches.

I love space. The more we learn about it, the more in awe I am. I cried when the James Webb Space Telescope released new images. I took an astronomy class in college and loved going stargazing when I was little. My dream career was "astronaut;" my life goal was "visit Pluto." I really love space!

However, I feel a bit skeptical about humans living in space. Research in space is obviously very important and necessary, but living on the Moon and Mars? I'm not so sure. After SpaceX's rocket launches, it seems like space is going to follow the same patterns we see on Earth, where only rich people will be able to afford luxuries, such as going to space.

Instead of trying to live in space, I think it makes more sense to make Earth more liveable. Attempting to slow or reverse global warming is one way, with efforts made by the people who have the power to make that difference. Another way is to provide universal healthcare so people can live healthier, happier lives.

I'm excited for Artemis I to finally launch, but I hope there will still be focus on the issues we experience here on Earth.

ENERGY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

The Argonne National Laboratory asserts that "all of the used nuclear fuel generated in every nuclear plant in the past 50 years would fill a football field to a depth of less than 10 yards," a testimony to the massive amount of nuclear waste storage space available.

Clearly, there are solutions to nuclear energy waste, and future research combined with technological advances may reveal more solutions.

I hope you now see the unharnessed potential in nuclear energy. I am not saying we should abandon all other fossil fuel alternatives and rely primarily on nuclear energy.

I am simply submitting that it is an option we should consider. Nuclear energy is clean. Nuclear energy is abundant. Nuclear energy is safe. There might be risks, but there are also ways to mitigate the risk.

Many countries use nuclear energy, and some such as France and Sweden depend on it as their primary energy source. Therefore, any serious fossil fuel replacement plan (that is, any plan that has the potential to remove the need for fossil fuels) should include nuclear energy.

GEMS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

three pretty impressive ones in Green Bay, and six smaller ones roughly an hour from Madison.

Near Madison, you have Parfrey's Glen State Natural Area and Pewits Nest by Baraboo, Stephens Falls outside Dodgeville and Montello Granite Quarry. The three by Green Bay are Big Smokey Falls, Brown County WI Fonferek's Glen and Wequiock Falls.

To see some of the biggest waterfalls in Wisconsin, there is actually a waterfall road trip that Dave Schlabowske compiled on the Bikepacking website. This route will allow travelers to see 28 waterfalls over a distance of 382 miles.

This loop spans over Ashland County, Bayfield County, Iron County and Sawyer County. For a chance to see the biggest waterfall in Wisconsin, drive to Superior to see Big Manitou Falls, which is an impressive 165 feet. To put that in perspective, it's about half the size of Niagara Falls.

Visiting Wisconsin's waterfalls is a perfect activity or trip for hikers, bikers and campers of all kinds. Regardless of what ones skill level is or where they live in Wisconsin, there is a waterfall adventure that is just right for everyone.