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Cranberry-based Westinghouse thinks it has designed a game changer in the nuclear power industry and two local congressmen say they are doing what they can to help.

Tim Murphy (R- Upper St. Clair) and Jason Altmire (D- McCandless) have teamed up to introduce the Nuclear Power 2021 act. Altmire says it is based on the Nuclear Power 2010 program, which he says gave a kick-start to the nuclear power industry. "It provided for loan guarantees and financing and permitting that was not available before," says Altmire.

Since that bill went into effect Westinghouse has signed contracts to build 14 nuclear power plants in the US. Four of those plants have broken ground in the preconstruction phase. Westinghouse spokesperson Vaughn Gilbert says the plants would be the first to be built in the U.S. since 1978. Gilbert also says those contracts have resulted in 5,000 jobs in the region.

The bill sponsored by Altmire and Murphy would use the same model but apply it to small modular nuclear reactors. "Hopefully by the year 2021 we can have at least two of these [small plants] up and running," says Altmire.

The legislation does not mention Westinghouse by name but Altmire says the company is the worldwide leader in the technology so it stands to reason that Southwestern Pennsylvania would benefit from the promotion of the technology.

The small plants, according to Altmire, can be built at a tenth of the cost of a large plant and produce about a 6th of the power. He goes on to say the new Westinghouse product allays some of the fears associated with nuclear power.

"There is less power being generated, there is less heat, it doesn't need to be near water, so a lot of the things that would give people concern about the nuclear industry because of what

happened in Japan are taken care of with the smaller design.”

Because they need less water the power plants can be built in areas of the western United States where larger plants are not possible.