

## McCain touts nuclear energy

*The candidate also pledges \$2 billion per year for clean coal at a Wednesday campaign stop devoted to energy policy.*

By David Espo *The Associated Press*

SPRINGFIELD, MO.) Sen. John McCain called Wednesday for the construction of 4 new nuclear reactors by 2030 and pledged \$2 billion per year in federal funds “to make clean coal a reality,” measures designed to reduce the need for foreign oil.

In a third straight day of campaigning devoted to the energy issue, the Republican presidential nominee-in-waiting also said the only time Democratic rival Barack Obama voted for a tax cut was for a “break for the oil companies.” McCain said the 104 nuclear reactors currently operating around the country produce about 20 percent of the nation’s annual electricity needs.

“Every year, these reactors alone spare the atmosphere from the equivalent of nearly all auto emissions in America. Yet for all these benefits, we have not broken ground on a single nuclear plant in over 30 years,” he said. “And our manufacturing base to even construct these plants is almost gone.”

Even so, he said he would set the country on a course to build 45 new ones by 2030, with a longer-term goal of adding another in the future. “We will need to recover all the knowledge and skills that have been lost over three stagnant decades in a highly technical field,” he conceded. Later, at a news conference, McCain said he favors steps to reduce the time that plant owners need to obtain the necessary permits.

He also suggested U.S. companies use common technology to shave the time it takes to bring a new nuclear facility on line. In an appearance before an audience at Missouri State University, McCain also said, “We will need to solve complex problems of moving and storing materials that will always need safeguarding.”

Shortly after he spoke, a participant in a campaign-organized round-table discussion of energy retired Marine Corps Gen. James Jones, said ob taming the necessary construction permits can take five years. “We should be able to cut that in half,” added Jones, a former NATO commander who is now chief executive of the U.S. Chamber Institute for 2 Century Energy. He also is on the board of Chevron.

Jones flew to Missouri aboard the campaign’s chartered jet, although, ironically, Democrats recently disclosed that his name has figured in Obama campaign discussions of potential Democratic vice-presidential running mates.

A drastic spike in worldwide oil prices has made energy a domestic political issue in a way it has not been since the Arab oil embargo of the 1970s.