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## McDonnell says safe uranium mining would benefit state

By OLYMPIA MEOLA

Gov. Bob McDonnell said this morning that he's waiting to see the results of a study on the safety of uranium mining in Southside Virginia, but that the state stands "to gain a lot by a safe and vibrant nuclear industry."

Virginia Uranium wants to mine a 119-million pound deposit in Pittsylvania County, which would require the state overturning a 1982 ban on the practice, and tap into a resource that could be worth \$10 billion.

A National Academy of Sciences committee is currently studying whether that can be done safely, and is expected to issue a report in December, just before

the start of the 2012 legislative session where a battle to lift the ban is likely.

"The obvious challenge is, can it be mined safely so it doesn't create public safety issues for the people around the mining site, or worse, contamination of groundwater that could impact... Virginia Beach," McDonnell said on WNIS radio this morning.

The station is based in Hampton Roads, where many residents fear heavy rains or flooding at the mine site near the North Carolina line could contaminate their drinking water supply. A recent Quinnipiac University poll of Virginia voters showed a 41-41 split on the



prospect of uranium mining.

McDonnell cast the mining, if done safely, as a benefit to the state in jobs and tax income.

"It will be a tremendous number of jobs, tax revenues and opportunities to support the nuclear industry," he said. "So if it can be done safely then I'm all for it, if it can't then we're going to have to take another course."