

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5680

AS OF JANUARY 29, 1992

Brief Description: Changing requirements for siting of electrical transmission facilities.

SPONSORS: Senators Thorsness, Patterson, Williams and Saling.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES

Staff: Phil Moeller (786-7445)

Hearing Dates: February 26, 1991; March 5, 1991; January 31, 1992

BACKGROUND:

Several areas in the state, most notably the Puget Sound region, have recently experienced high rates of economic growth. In conjunction with this economic growth has been a rapid increase in the usage of electricity in the region.

Five major transmission lines bring power into the Puget Sound area, the last of which was energized in 1977. The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) has expressed concern that the transmission system has reached its capacity during times of the heaviest electricity demand. If one of the five lines were to be out of service at the time of the heaviest peak, an electricity blackout could occur and cover the area from Portland, Oregon, to Vancouver, British Columbia.

As growth occurs, especially in the Puget Sound region, siting energy facilities is expected to become increasingly difficult. The Energy Facilities Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC) presently has limited authority to approve the siting of electrical transmission lines. This authority exists for new transmission lines as "associated facilities" of an energy facility when these lines are constructed to operate in excess of 200,000 volts and connect a thermal power plant to the northwest power grid.

SUMMARY:

The Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC) is given authority to approve the siting of electrical transmission lines constructed to operate at nominal voltages above 100,000 volts, including transmission lines serving as associated facilities and constructed to operate above 100,000 volts.

EFSEC is directed to adopt on recommendations a specific procedure for processing applications for siting electrical transmission facilities.

Certain statutory references are corrected.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available