

SENATE BILL REPORT

SJM 8011

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES, FEBRUARY 22, 1991

Brief Description: Requesting that the United States Department of Energy maintain its commitment to the Tri-Party agreement.

SPONSORS: Senators Thorsness, Jesernig, Patterson, Erwin and Metcalf.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Thorsness, Chairman; Saling, Vice Chairman; Jesernig, Nelson, Patterson, Roach, Stratton, Sutherland, and Williams.

Staff: Phil Moeller (786-7445)

Hearing Dates: February 21, 1991: February 22, 1991

BACKGROUND:

Since the early 1940's, the Federal Government has undertaken production of nuclear materials for national defense programs at the Hanford facility in south-central Washington. A large volume of radioactive and hazardous waste byproducts from the years of defense materials production remain stored or disposed at the Hanford facility.

In 1989 the United States Department of Energy (USDOE), the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), signed a landmark agreement providing for an enforceable schedule on the cleanup and restoration of the Hanford facility. A key element of the agreement provided for the construction of a facility to glassify and immobilize waste. This facility is known as the Hanford Vitrification Plant. Recently USDOE announced a proposed delay in constructing this facility.

USDOE has recently announced that Hanford will no longer be a defense materials production site--instead it will serve as the leading USDOE site for promoting technology in the field of environmental restoration. A report released by Ecology and EPA late in 1990 examined the approach taken at Hanford on specific activities performed prior to actual cleanup. This report documented disparities in the costs of these activities compared to similar private sector examples.

The Fast Flux Test Facility (FFTF) is an experimental test reactor at Hanford. Lacking a long-term mission, USDOE has attempted to close the FFTF through the funding process.

Within the last year, concern has been raised that there may be a lack of qualified personnel in the professions and trades needed for the environmental restoration activities to be undertaken at Hanford over the next several decades.

SUMMARY:

USDOE is asked to maintain its previous schedule related to the Hanford Vitrification Plant, maintain its commitment to the agreement signed with Ecology and the EPA, continue the operations and develop new missions for the FFTF, increase the cost-effectiveness of cleanup planning activities, and provide incentives to allow for additional local retraining programs.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: none requested

TESTIMONY FOR:

This memorial sends a strong signal from the state of Washington to USDOE relating to the future of Hanford.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: PRO: John Wagoner, Hanford Site Manager, United States Dept. of Energy; Terry Husseman, Dept. of Ecology; Gerald Pollet, Heart of America Northwest