

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESB 5831

As Reported By House Committee On:
Energy & Utilities

Title: An act relating to specifying that payments to building owners authorized under RCW 10.27A.035 are available only if the primary heat source of a structure is electricity.

Brief Description: Limiting certain payments by electrical utilities to owners of residences in which the primary heat source is electric resistance space heat.

Sponsors: Senators Barr, Sutherland and McCaslin.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Energy & Utilities, April 1, 1993, DP.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Grant, Chair; Finkbeiner, Vice Chair; Casada, Ranking Minority Member; Miller, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Johanson; Kessler; Kremen; Long; and Ludwig.

Staff: Harry Reinert (786-7110).

Background: In 1990, the Legislature enacted a new energy code for new residential construction. The code sets standards for housing envelope components such as insulation thickness, window efficiency, the amount of window space allowed, and minimum heat pump efficiency.

The residential energy code recognizes two climate zones, one largely in western Washington and one largely in eastern Washington. The code also sets different standards for homes heated with electric resistance space heat and homes with gas or heat pumps. The standards for homes heated with electric resistance space heat are higher.

Electric utilities are required to pay for part of the added costs of meeting the energy code for electrically heated homes. The payments are made to the owner of the residence at the time it was constructed. Single family residences with 2,000 square feet or less of heated floor space which

are heated with electric resistance space heat are eligible for a payment of at least \$900. For multifamily residences, the minimum payment for each residential unit is \$390.

The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) pays one-half of the costs of these payments incurred by an electrical utility which purchases at least 1 percent of its firm load from BPA.

The State Building Code Council (SBCC) adopted rules implementing the 1990 energy code. The rules distinguish between residences with electric resistance space heat as a primary or secondary heat source and residences with any other type of space heat. A residence is deemed to have electric resistance space heat if there is at least one watt of installed electric heating capacity per square foot of residential living space.

In at least one utility service area, residences have been constructed to the higher electric code but have natural gas as the primary heat source. These residences have had enough installed electric space heat capacity, over one watt per square foot, to qualify for the \$900 payments.

Summary of Bill: An electric utility is required to make a payment for a residential structure constructed to the standards of the electric resistance space heating energy code only if the primary heat source for the residence is electric resistance space heat.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: The payment for compliance with the electrical space heat energy code was intended to be available only for homes whose primary source of heat is electric resistance space heat. The payments come from electric utilities. Some electric utilities have been required to make payments to builders for residences whose primary source of space heat is natural gas. This violates the intent of the payment provisions.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Collins Sprague, Washington Water Power (pro).