

FINAL BILL REPORT

SB 5838

C 364 L 93

SYNOPSIS AS ENACTED

Brief Description: Creating an energy siting process review committee.

SPONSORS: Senators Sutherland, Williams and Roach

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES

BACKGROUND:

The Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC) is an entity created by the Legislature to provide a one-stop permitting review process for large energy production, distribution, or transmission facilities. EFSEC was created in the 1970's when projected electrical demand led energy policy officials to plan several large power plants throughout the region. The membership of EFSEC consists mainly of state agency directors or their designees. EFSEC is staffed by the Washington State Energy Office.

Statutes pertaining to EFSEC contain specific thresholds for various energy production and distribution facilities. Above these thresholds the projects are considered by EFSEC; below these thresholds, the projects are evaluated through a permit process by various federal, state, and local jurisdictions. Thresholds for pipelines involve the size and sometimes the length of the pipe. This varies based on the product being transported.

For the siting of electricity-producing power plants, the EFSEC threshold is a generating capacity of 250 megawatts (MW), roughly one-fourth the power needed by a city the size of Seattle. Over the past decade, with only three exceptions, all newly proposed energy projects in the state have been designed at levels that do not receive EFSEC consideration. Several of these projects are designed at levels just under the threshold.

Most of these recently-proposed energy production and transmission projects in this state have faced some degree of local opposition. The opposition has arisen for all types of projects, including transmission lines, substations, small hydropower projects, wind generating facilities, and others.

The Washington Energy Strategy Committee, in its final report of January, 1993, stated that the siting process for energy projects in this state is dysfunctional. The Strategy

Committee recommended an intensive review of the current process.

SUMMARY:

An energy siting process review committee is created. The committee is charged with reviewing the siting process applicable to major thermal plants, combustion turbines, cogeneration plants, hydroelectric facilities, natural gas pipelines, electric transmission lines, and renewable energy sources including wind, solar, geothermal and biomass.

Membership of the 15 person committee shall consist of two members from both the House of Representatives and the Senate, three members representing citizens at large, and eight additional members, each representing one of the following entities: cities; counties; publicly-owned electric utilities; investor-owned electric utilities; natural gas local distribution utilities; natural gas pipeline companies; environmental organizations; and independent power producers. The chair of the committee shall be selected from the members representing citizens at large.

The Washington State Energy Office shall provide staff support to the committee.

The committee shall report its findings and any proposed legislation to the Governor and appropriate legislative standing committees by December 1, 1993. The act expires June 30, 1994.

VOTES ON FINAL PASSAGE:

Senate	47	0	
House	92	0	(House amended)
Senate	47	0	(Senate concurred)

EFFECTIVE: July 25, 1993