HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

SB 5372

Title: *An act relating to low-level radioactive waste disposal sites.*

Brief Description: *Limiting the number of times the maximum disposal fee at a radioactive waste disposal site may be adjusted.*

Sponsors: *Senators Finkbeiner, Brown, Hochstatter, Strannigan and Rossi; by request of Utilities & Transportation Commission.*

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES

Meeting Date: March 25, 1997.

Bill Analysis Prepared by: Margaret Allen (786-7110).

Background: In 1980, Congress passed the Low Level Radioactive Waste Policy Act, which allows states to form compacts to manage commercial low-level radioactive waste (LLRW) generated within the compact region. Washington is a member of the Northwest Interstate Compact; other compact members include Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Utah, and Wyoming.

Typical LLRW includes contaminated tools, rags, clothing, wood, filters, medical materials, and some industrial wastes, from such sources as hospitals, research institutions, radiopharmaceutical industries, and nuclear utilities.

The only site available for disposing of LLRW generated in the eight states that are members of the Northwest Interstate Compact is located on the Hanford Reservation in Eastern Washington. An agreement between the Northwest Interstate Compact and the Rocky Mountain Compact allows the site to accept limited quantities of LLRW from Colorado, Nevada, and New Mexico as well.

In 1991, the Legislature enacted legislation requiring the site operator to be subject to rate regulation by the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission. The maximum disposal rates are adjusted semi-annually, in January and July, to incorporate inflation and volume adjustments. ***It has been suggested that semi-annual adjustments decrease rate predictability and are unnecessary.***

Summary of Bill: Maximum disposal rates for LLRW will be adjusted annually in January.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.