

SENATE BILL REPORT

SJM 8024

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Energy & Utilities, February 2, 1998

Brief Description: Urging Congress not to sell the Bonneville Power Administration.

Sponsors: Senators Loveland, Rasmussen, Prentice, Snyder, B. Sheldon, McAuliffe, Fairley, Brown, T. Sheldon, Goings, Hargrove, Spanel, Kohl, Fraser, Heavey, Kline, Haugen, Franklin, Wojahn, Jacobsen, Bauer, Thibaudeau, Patterson and Schow.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Energy & Utilities: 2/2/98 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Finkbeiner, Chair; Hochstatter, Vice Chair; Brown, Jacobsen, Rossi, T. Sheldon and Strannigan.

Staff: Andrea McNamara (786-7483)

Background: Congress originally enacted the Bonneville Project Act in 1937 for the stated purpose of improving navigation on the Columbia River and to insure that the electric energy generated by the project be operated for the benefit of the general public, particularly residential and rural consumers.

When the Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act was enacted by Congress in 1980, one of its stated purposes was to assure the Pacific Northwest of an adequate, efficient, economical, and reliable power supply.

Concerns have been raised recently about the possibility that Congress may decide to privatize or sell the federal power system, jeopardizing the region's ability to retain the benefits of the system.

In addition to the availability of low-cost power, supporters of the Bonneville Power Administration cite its long-standing relationship with the Northwest's public utility districts and rural electric associations, and its contributions to salmon restoration and other public purposes as important regional benefits that could be jeopardized by the sale of BPA.

Summary of Bill: The President and the United States Congress are requested to agree not to sell the Bonneville Power Administration and to allow it to continue fulfilling its mission of providing low-cost power to the Pacific Northwest.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Testimony For: Bonneville provides tremendous benefits to the region that need to be protected, and selling BPA would put those benefits in serious jeopardy. While it was recently announced that the President is not proposing to sell BPA as part of this year's budget package, it is still important to send the memorial to the President and the Congress letting them know the state doesn't want them to consider selling BPA now or in the future.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Senator Loveland, prime sponsor; George F. Tyler; Cindy Custer, BPA.