HOUSE BILL REPORT
HJM 4022

As Passed Legislature

Brief Description: Requesting full funding for a vitrification treatment plant at the Hanford site.

Sponsors: Representatives Delvin, Hankins, G. Chandler, B. Chandler, Mastin, Lisk, Grant, Linville and Mitchell.

Brief History:
Committee Activity:
Agriculture & Ecology: 2/1/00, 2/3/00 [DP].
Floor Activity:
Passed House: 2/10/00, 97-0.
Passed Senate: 2/29/00, 47-0.
Passed Legislature.

Brief Summary of Bill

- HJM 4022 petitions the President of the United States and Congress to provide full funding for cleanup of Hanford radioactive tank waste.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ECOLOGY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives G. Chandler, Republican Co-Chair; Linville, Democratic Co-Chair; Cooper, Democratic Vice Chair; Koster, Republican Vice Chair; Anderson; B. Chandler; Delvin; Fortunato; Grant; Reardon; Schoesler; Stensen; Sump and Wood.

Staff: Carole Richmond (786-7114).

Background:

Sixty percent of the nation's nuclear waste is stored in aging tanks at the Hanford Site, a 560-square mile area in Southeastern Washington near Richland. The tank waste, which has been accumulating since 1944, is the result of producing plutonium for national defense. There are 177 underground storage tanks containing 54 million

gallons of highly radioactive waste. Each tank is the size of a football field (300 feet by 160 feet) and 150 feet high.

On May 15, 1989, the U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and Washington Department of Ecology signed a comprehensive cleanup and compliance agreement for the cleanup of the Hanford Reservation. The agreement was amended in October 1993 with a plan to use vitrification to solidify high-level and low-level waste stored in the tanks. Vitrification changes the form of waste from a leachable sludge into an immobile solid.

Facility construction for vitrification of low-activity waste was scheduled to begin in 1994 and facility construction for vitrification of high-level waste is scheduled to begin in 2002. The total cost of cleaning up the 177 underground storage tanks at Hanford is estimated at $30.5 billion.

Summary of Bill:

The President and Congress are asked to provide full funding as necessary to build the vitrification plant, retrieve waste from the tanks, feed waste into the plant, and dispose of the resulting glass logs.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Money needs to be set aside for construction of the plants. We need to stay on schedule.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Jerome Delvin, prime sponsor.