

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SJM 8020

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Energy, Technology & Telecommunications, February 1, 2000

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

**Sponsors:** Senators Loveland, Hale, Roach and B. Sheldon.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Energy, Technology & Telecommunications: 2/1/2000 [DP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, TECHNOLOGY & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Brown, Chair; Fraser, Hochstatter, Roach and Rossi.

**Staff:** Andrea McNamara (786-7483)

**Background:** In October 1993, the Hanford Site, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and local parties signed an amendment to the Hanford Tri-Party Agreement outlining a plan to use vitrification to solidify high-level and low-level waste stored there.

Fifty-four million gallons of high-level radioactive waste is stored on site in underground single-wall and double-wall tanks. The waste includes highly-radioactive sludge and less radioactive liquids.

Vitrification involves heating the wastes to extreme temperatures by running electrical current through them, adding glass-forming chemicals, and then extracting the molten glass and shaping it into logs as it cools and solidifies. Although the process does not reduce radioactivity, vitrification changes the form of waste into an immobile solid that can be more easily prevented from contaminating soil, ground water, and surface water.

The vitrification facility at Hanford will be the largest radioactive waste melter in the world. At a cost of approximately \$3 billion, construction is scheduled to begin in approximately 2002, and the facility is slated to begin operating in 2007.

**Summary of Bill:** The President and the Congress are requested to provide full funding as necessary to build a vitrification treatment plant, retrieve waste from the storage tanks, feed the waste into the vitrification plant, and dispose of the resulting glass logs on schedule to meet the negotiated dates contained in the Tri-Party Agreement.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Testimony For:** Vitrification was invented at Hanford and is being used throughout Europe and at all other major Department of Energy sites around the United States. The state needs approximately \$600 million set aside in order for the public/private partnership with British Nuclear Fuels (BNF) to go forward. BNF is putting up \$500 million of its own funds to initiate the public/private partnership, and we need to pressure the President and Congress to uphold the federal government's end of the bargain. Congress will be making its funding decisions this spring.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** PRO: Senator Valoria Loveland, prime sponsor; Senator Pat Hale, co-sponsor.