

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6107

As Passed Senate, March 12, 2001

Title: An act relating to geothermal energy.

Brief Description: Extending the applicability of provisions relating to geothermal energy.

Sponsors: Senators Fraser and Morton.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Environment, Energy & Water: 2/27/01 [DP].

Passed Senate: 3/12/01, 48-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY & WATER

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Fraser, Chair; Regala, Vice Chair; Hale, Honeyford, Jacobsen, McDonald and Morton.

Staff: Richard Rodger (786-7461)

Background: In 1981, the Legislature provided for the allocation of revenues distributed to the state under the Mineral Lands Leasing Act of 1920 and the Geothermal Steam Act of 1970. The revenues were dedicated to reduce of dependence on nonrenewable energy, stimulate the development of geothermal energy, mitigate impacts of geothermal development, provide financial assistance to counties to offset the costs associated with that development, and maintain the productivity of renewable resources through the reinvestment of proceeds from these resources.

The funds are distributed as follows: (1) 30 percent to the Department of Natural Resources for geothermal exploration and assessment; (2) 30 percent to Washington State University for the purpose of encouraging the development of geothermal energy; and (3) 40 percent to the county of origin for mitigating impacts caused by geothermal energy exploration, assessment, and development.

The account has been dormant since 1989 due to the limitations, placed on geothermal energy development on federal lands, by the U.S. Forest Service.

The chapter creating the geothermal energy account terminates on June 30, 2001.

Summary of Bill: The geothermal energy statute is extended 10 additional years.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: Washington State lags behind most other western states in the development of geothermal energy. It is the goal of the U.S. Department of Energy to provide 10 percent of the electricity needs of the western states by 2020. This bill will keep in place the structure to enhance geothermal development once the U.S. Forest Service begins leasing federal lands for this activity.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Dave Sjoding, WSU Energy Program (pro); Curtis Framel, USDOE.