

6177

Sponsor(s): Senators Fraser, Morton, Brown, Winsley, Fairley, T. Sheldon, Finkbeiner, Franklin, Jacobsen, Spanel, Regala, Snyder, Prentice, Patterson, Hargrove, Constantine and Kohl-Welles

Brief Description: Managing energy supply and demand.

SB 6177 - DIGEST

(SUBSTITUTED FOR - SEE 2ND SUB)

Finds that: (1) A sufficient, reliable, and affordable supply of energy is critically important to the health and welfare of the citizens of the state and to the prosperity of the state and region;

(2) The state is experiencing dramatic increases in the costs of electricity and natural gas as a result of many factors out of the state's direct control, and these unprecedented price increases have a disproportionate impact on the low-income citizens of the state;

(3) It remains in the state's best interest to encourage private investment in renewable energy resources and to reduce the reliance on a limited number of the energy resources used in this state;

(4) Energy generation and distribution systems and technologies have changed greatly since the original enactment of the state's energy facility siting laws thirty years ago. Experience during this time has demonstrated that a state council with the primary responsibility for energy facility siting approval is warranted, but that its procedures and authorities can be improved to enhance energy supplies;

(5) Existing legislative oversight of the state's response to energy shortages is in need of updating since the original creation of the joint legislative committee on energy and utilities after the last energy crisis; and

(6) The current energy situation requires that the state undertake economic and policy decisions to effectuate both short-term and long-term solutions that will assist individual consumers as well as commercial and industrial customers of electricity while protecting the environment.

Declares an intent of this act to: (1) Help mitigate the adverse consequences of recent utility rate increases on Washington's low-income citizens by creating incentives for gas and electric utilities to adopt billing discounts and to make contributions to low-income energy assistance programs;

(2) Provide electricity consumers the opportunity to exercise their market power by choosing to purchase power from alternative energy resources including renewable resources, and to reward businesses and utilities that become "EnergySmart";

(3) Modify the statutory procedures and authorities of the energy facility siting evaluation council to encourage generators to operate their facilities to their fullest capacity;

(4) Modify the name and statutory procedures of the joint legislative committee tasked with providing oversight in times of

energy shortages;

(5) Offer limited tax incentives to direct service industrial customers to develop alternative sources of electricity and relieve the burden their demand places on the Bonneville power administration; and

(6) Remove unnecessary barriers to the development of new, cost-based electricity generation resources by public agencies.