

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6191

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Water, Energy & Environment, January 19, 2006

Title: An act relating to wood biomass fuel.

Brief Description: Providing a definition of wood biomass fuel.

Sponsors: Senators Poulsen, Morton, and Sheldon.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Water, Energy & Environment: 1/11/06, 1/19/06 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER, ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Poulsen, Chair; Rockefeller, Vice Chair; Morton, Ranking Minority Member; Delvin, Fraser, Honeyford and Mulliken.

Staff: Richard Rodger (786-7461)

Background: Liquid fuels can be produced from wood and wood residues. Two of the methods used for producing the oils that are used in fuel products are pyrolysis and gasification.

Pyrolysis is the breakdown of biomass in the absence of oxygen at temperatures above 250C. The process produces a solid (char or charcoal), a liquid (bio-oil), and a mixture of gases. The liquid output (bio-oil) contains a high energy density (energy per unit of volume) and potential for liquid fuel substitution. Wood derived bio-oil can be obtained through a process of gasification which produces a synthetic liquid fuel suitable as a transportation fuel. Wood biomass fuel can be blended at any percentage with petroleum diesel or gasoline or used as a pure product.

In 2003, the legislature passed a sales tax exemption covering the purchase of machinery, equipment, and buildings used for retailing wood biomass fuels. Vehicles used for wood biomass distribution are also exempt from the sales tax as long as the amount of wood biomass fuel the vehicles haul equals at least 75 percent of all fuel distributed by the vehicle. Qualifying fuels are fuels with at least 20 percent fuel derived from wood biomass. The sales tax exemption expires on June 30, 2009.

A definition section contained in part of the 2003 legislation, and cross-referenced in the sales tax exemption, was the subject of a null and void clause and did not take effect.

Summary of Bill: "Wood biomass fuel" is defined to mean a pyrolytic liquid fuel or synthesis gas-derived liquid fuel comprised primarily of carbon monoxide and hydrogen, produced from wood, and used in internal combustion engines.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: This bill is a housekeeping measure that we support.

Testimony Other: The legislature may want to reconsider its definition of wood biomass fuel to include "spent pulping liquor" as done by the federal government in the new federal energy bill.

Who Testified: PRO: Toni Potter, League of Women Voters.

OTHER: Bill Stauffacher, American Forest & Paper Association; Kristen Sawin, Weyerhaeuser.