

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5149

As of January 26, 2009

Title: An act relating to assessing the state's geothermal resources for electrical power production.

Brief Description: Creating the geothermal assessment committee.

Sponsors: Senators Kline, Swecker, Rockefeller, Pflug, Fraser, Hargrove, Jarrett, Pridemore, Kohl-Welles, Schoesler, Brandland and Shin.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Environment, Water & Energy: 1/27/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, WATER & ENERGY

Staff: Sam Thompson (786-7413)

Background: Washington's potential for generating energy from geothermal sources has not been analyzed to the degree that other potential energy sources have been studied. In 1981 the Department of Natural Resources Geology and Earth Resources Division published a map indicating hundreds of thermal and mineral springs and wells and providing basic information about them. Most of the thermal and mineral springs are located in the Cascade Range, and many are associated with volcanoes. Most of the thermal wells are located in the Columbia Basin. The agency updated the data in 1994. It is suggested that the state should undertake more intensive analysis of the potential for generating energy from geothermal sources.

Summary of Bill: A geothermal resource assessment committee is created to comprehensively assess geothermal resources in the state and their potential for environmentally responsible development for power production. The assessment must include:

- characterization of resources and potential for development for electrical generation and heating based upon current and projected technologies;
- economic implications of development potential;
- a review and description of current geothermal lease payments on federal lands;
- a review of state lands with development potential;
- a review of the effect of state water resource laws and policies on developing resources; and

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- recommendations for legislative and administrative actions to encourage environmentally responsible resource development.

The committee must provide the assessment and recommendations to the Legislature by December 2009.

The committee will be chaired by the Commissioner of Public Lands (CPL), or the CPL's designee, and will include the Energy Policy Division of the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development; the chair of the Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council; the state geologist within the Department of Natural Resources (DNR); and the chair of the Utilities and Transportation Commission.

The CPL will also select representatives of the following entities, interests, and agencies to serve on the committee: publicly and privately owned utilities; independent power producers; geologists from academic, research, and private sectors; other interested sectors, including agriculture, forestry, and environmental; tribal governments with significant geothermal resource interests; and federal agencies with regulatory or land management responsibilities relating to development of geothermal interests.

DNR will provide necessary staff and administrative support.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 25, 2009.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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