

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6338

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As of February 1, 2012

**Title:** An act relating to studying densified biomass as a renewable energy source.

**Brief Description:** Studying densified biomass as a renewable energy source.

**Sponsors:** Senators Morton and Carrell.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Energy, Natural Resources & Marine Waters: 2/01/12.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, NATURAL RESOURCES & MARINE WATERS

**Staff:** Angeline Thomas (786-7470)

**Background:** Congress approved legislation in 1978 to promote greater use of renewable energy.

In 2006 Washington State voters approved the Energy Independence Act, also known as Initiative 937 (I-937), that requires certain electric utilities to use eligible renewable resources.

The term eligible renewable resource includes wind; solar; geothermal energy; landfill and sewage gas; wave and tidal power; and certain biodiesel fuels. The following biomass is also classified as an eligible renewable resource: animal waste and solid organic fuels from wood, forest, or field residues and dedicated energy crops.

Washington State may have potential material for creating renewable densified biomass fuel.

Data shows that Western Europe, China, Japan, and other Asian countries have chosen to use densified biomass as a renewable energy fuel to heat homes, businesses, and other facilities in lieu of petroleum-based and electricity-based heating systems.

**Summary of Bill:** Washington State University extension energy program must conduct a study of densified biomass as a renewable energy source and report back to the Legislature and governor by December 1, 2013. The study must include the best possible projections of specified ten categories of information. The study must be done using existing resources. There is a January 1, 2013, expiration date.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**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.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: This is an important piece of legislation for studying ways to improve Washington's economic recovery and energy future through the use of densified biomass or wood pellets. Wood pellets leave little to no imprint on the environment, create much needed jobs, and lessen our nation's dependence on foreign oil. Washington State has a huge supply of the raw material used to make renewable densified biomass fuel as it comes from waste materials. The heating efficiency from burning wood pellets is more than three times better than using electricity for heat and it emits no additional carbon dioxide. If this same wasted material used to create wood pellets was left to decay, it would emit the same amount of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere as it would if converted to thermal energy. Additionally, burning wood pellets converts the methane gas produced during the process of decay into thermal energy. Instead of decaying in our forests, densified biomass is more efficient as thermal energy that produces heat to warm homes, businesses and other facilities.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Leah Hauer, Deborah Hannig, NW Hearth Patio and BBQ Assn.; Gary Smith, Independent Business Assn.; Scott Dilley, WA Farm Bureau.