

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6353

As of January 31, 2012

Title: An act relating to the application of chapter 80.50 RCW to the construction, reconstruction, or modification of certain electrical transmission facilities

Brief Description: Concerning the application of chapter 80.50 RCW to the construction, reconstruction, or modification of certain electrical transmission facilities.

Sponsors: Senator Ranker.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Energy, Natural Resources & Marine Waters: 1/30/12.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, NATURAL RESOURCES & MARINE WATERS

Staff: William Bridges (786-7416)

Background: Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC). EFSEC is the permitting and certificating authority for the siting of major energy facilities in Washington. An EFSEC site certification authorizes an applicant to construct and operate an energy facility in lieu of any other permit or document required by any other state agency or subdivision.

EFSEC Members. EFSEC is composed of representatives from five state agencies – the Departments of Commerce, Ecology, Fish and Wildlife, and Natural Resources; and the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission – and a chair appointed by the Governor. Four other departments may each choose to participate in EFSEC for a particular project: Agriculture, Health, Transportation, and Military. Finally, local governments must also appoint members to the council for the review of proposed facilities located in their jurisdictions.

EFSEC Jurisdiction and Electrical Transmission Facilities. EFSEC has jurisdiction over the following electrical transmission facilities: (1) new transmission lines 115 kilovolts (kV) or greater that are necessary to connect a power plant to the region's power grid, (2) electrical transmission facilities in national interest electric transmission corridors as designated by the U.S. Secretary of Energy; and (3) certain facilities 115 kV or greater that run between existing local government boundaries if an applicant opts-in to EFSEC.

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.

Summary of Bill: An applicant may choose EFSEC to site any transmission facility 115kV or greater.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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: The bill would expand the ability for transmission providers to opt in to the EFSEC process. A number of projects could benefit from a centralized siting process focused on projects of a statewide or regional significance. Washington is the only western state that does not have a statewide siting process.

CON: The Legislature has looked at expanding EFSEC's transmission authority twice in the last ten years. In 2007 a compromise between local governments and investor-owned utilities (IOUs) was achieved that resulted in local jurisdictions increasing their planning efforts. There is no evidence that compromise has failed. All the current IOU transmission lines have been sited locally without the need for state preemption. What problem is this bill trying to fix?

Persons Testifying: PRO: Ken Johnson, Puget Sound Energy; Jim Luce, EFSEC.

CON: Victoria Lincoln, AWC; Robert Mack, Tacoma Public Utilities.