
Technology & Economic Development Committee

SSB 5991

Brief Description: Studying nuclear power as a replacement for electricity generated from the combustion of fossil fuels.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Energy, Environment & Telecommunications (originally sponsored by Senators Ericksen, Sheldon, Hewitt, Brown, Mullet, Honeyford and Benton).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Creates a Joint Select Committee on Nuclear Energy to study how the state can advance and support the generation of clean energy in the region through the use of nuclear power.

Hearing Date: 2/20/14

Staff: Scott Richards (786-7156).

Background:

According to the federal Energy Information Agency, there are currently 65 commercially operating nuclear power plants with 104 nuclear reactors in 31 states around the country. These plants generate about 20 percent of U.S. electricity each year.

The Columbia Generating Station (CGS) near Richland, Washington is the Pacific Northwest's only commercially operating nuclear power plant. CGS is operated by Energy Northwest, a not-for-profit joint operating agency. The entire output of CGS is marketed by the Bonneville Power Administration. According to the most recent state fuel mix report, CGS supplied about 4.7 percent of the electricity used by retail customers in the state in 2012.

Summary of Bill:

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.

Joint Select Taskforce on Nuclear Energy. The Joint Select Taskforce on Nuclear Energy (Taskforce) is created to study how the state can advance and support the generation of clean energy in the region through the use of nuclear power. In its deliberations, the Taskforce must consider the greatest amount of environmental benefit for each dollar spent based on the life-cycle cost of any nuclear power technology. Life-cycle costs must include the storage and disposal of any nuclear wastes. The Taskforce must report any findings and recommendations to the Legislature by December 1, 2014, and terminates on December 15, 2014.

Taskforce Membership. The Taskforce must consist of eight members that serve on the legislative standing committees with primary jurisdiction over energy issues. The President of the Senate must appoint two members from the majority caucus and two members from the minority caucus. The Speaker of the House of Representatives must appoint two members from each caucus. The Taskforce members must choose their own chair and officers from their own membership.

Meetings. The taskforce must hold no more than four meetings, with two of those meetings in Richland, Washington.

Staff. The taskforce must be staffed by nonpartisan staff of the Senate and House of Representatives. All expenses and hiring of additional staff must be approved by the Senate and House of Representatives.

Findings. The Legislature finds that nuclear power is a safe, reliable, cost-effective, and carbon-free source of electricity. Accordingly, the Legislature intends that nuclear power should be studied as a possible replacement for electricity consumed in the region that is generated from the combustion of fossil fuels.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 19, 2014.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.