

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5093

As of February 26, 2015

Title: An act relating to creating the nuclear energy education program.

Brief Description: Creating the nuclear energy education program.

Sponsors: Senators Brown, Hewitt, Mullet and Sheldon.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Energy, Environment & Telecommunications: 1/27/15, 2/03/15 [DPS-WM].
Ways & Means: 2/11/15.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5093 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Ericksen, Chair; Sheldon, Vice Chair; McCoy, Ranking Minority Member; Braun, Brown, Cleveland, Habib, Honeyford and Ranker.

Staff: William Bridges (786-7416)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Michael Bezanson (786-7449)

Background: American Nuclear Society (ANS). Formed in 1954, ANS is a not-for-profit corporation that, according to its bylaws, promotes the advancement of science and engineering relating to the atomic nucleus, and of allied sciences and arts. Membership is composed of those persons engaged in activities relating to the fields of nuclear science and engineering. ANS has two local sections in Washington representing Puget Sound and eastern Washington.

ANS developed classroom resources for teachers and students and offers workshops for teachers where they can interact with nuclear professionals and learn about the various aspects of nuclear technologies.

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.

Washington State University (WSU) Energy Program. The WSU Energy Program is a self-supported department within the university. Its staff offers technical expertise to government entities and the general public through a number of energy-related programs, such as resource conservation management, agricultural efficiency, and workforce and economic development.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): Creating a Nuclear Energy Education Program. A program is established to award grants for: (1) classroom visitors, called nuclear ambassadors, who can introduce nuclear science and technology to students in grades eight through twelve and (2) science teachers to attend workshops on nuclear energy. Grants may be used for mileage, meals, lodging, and workshop tuition.

Determining Eligible Nuclear Ambassadors. Among other things, an ambassador must: (1) be a resident of Washington; (2) be a member of ANS; (3) complete a background check as required by school district policy where the ambassador chooses to serve; and (4) use materials prepared by ANS, or similar organizations and interested businesses, when possible. Priority must be given to applications where the applicant demonstrates a matching donation from a private source.

Determining Eligible Science Teachers. An eligible science teacher must be: (1) endorsed to teach one or more science classes in grade eight or higher through grade twelve; and (2) certificated under Washington law.

Determining Eligible Work Shops. A qualifying workshop must be: (1) sponsored by ANS, specified state universities, or a United States Department of Energy National Laboratory located in the state; (2) for science teachers in grades 8–12; and (3) designed to teach matters relating to nuclear energy.

Funding the Nuclear Energy Education Program. The program is funded by legislative appropriations and donated funds from private and public sources. The Washington nuclear energy education account is established in the state treasury for the deposit of any federal grants, legislative appropriations, and donated funds from private and public sources.

Administering the Nuclear Energy Education Program. The program is administered by the director of the WSU Energy Program, or the director's designee. The director may consult with ANS or similar organizations when selecting applicants.

Avoiding Unintended Liability. Nuclear ambassadors are not employees or agents of the state or any of its political subdivisions. The Nuclear Energy Education Program does not create any civil liability on the part of the state or any of its political subdivisions, officers, employees, or agents for the actions taken by a nuclear ambassador during the course of serving under the program.

Requiring Annual Reports. By December 15 of each year grants are awarded, the WSU Energy Program must report to the Legislature the number and types of grants awarded under the program, among other things.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT & TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): Adds interested businesses to the entities WSU may consult with when selecting applicants. Requires that WSU give priority to applications where the applicant has demonstrated a matching donation from private sources. Clarifies that a nuclear ambassador can be a local section member of ANS. Allows UW or WSU to sponsor a teachers' workshop. Specifies that only a national laboratory located in the state may sponsor a teachers' workshop. Requires WSU to report to the Legislature the number and types of grants awarded under the program.

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 on Original Bill (Energy, Environment & Telecommunications): PRO: The program created in this bill will help clear up a lot of myths about nuclear energy, and will help spread the word that there are good-paying jobs in the nuclear technology industry. The nuclear education program can work with current efforts at WSU and Columbia Basin College in helping educate the workforce required for a low-carbon future. Nuclear science is misunderstood or not known at all and this program will provide students with reliable information based in reality. Education is important to ANS and the nuclear education program will fit well with the mission of ANS.

OTHER: The WSU Energy Program is staffed by unbiased technical experts and is flattered it has been chosen to administer the program. WSU fully supports the bill because it will raise awareness about nuclear science and will support a vibrant and stable nuclear industry in Washington. This program should not be used to politically indoctrinate students on the benefits of nuclear power. The problems with nuclear power should also be discussed.

Persons Testifying (Energy, Environment & Telecommunications): PRO: Senator Brown, prime sponsor; Brent Ridge, V.P., Corporate Services, Chief Financial Officer, Risk Officer, Energy NW; Wanda Munn, ANS; Carl Holder, Chair, Eastern WA Section, ANS.

OTHER: Sheila Riggs, Joseph Iannelli, WSU; Arthur West, citizen.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: We are flattered to be identified in the bill to administer the Nuclear Energy Education Program. We do have the expertise in house to perform the role of administrator of this program. We would like to do this work if the Legislature would like us to do this and if it is funded. While the WSU Energy Program's role is to fulfill an administrative function in this bill, WSU nevertheless does have a lot of people involved in the nuclear space and a lot of expertise in this area.

We believe there are multiple facets of this bill that are very beneficial. Three of them are as follows: (1) this legislation will support programs that will educate Washington students in

nuclear energy and the necessary role that it will play in meeting the clean energy needs of the future; (2) it's base-load power with zero emissions; (3) not only is this related to nuclear energy, but it is also nuclear-science related, which is very important to the future of our Washington students.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Sheila Riggs; WSU; James Gaston, Energy NW.