

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6217

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Energy, Environment & Telecommunications, January 20, 2016

Title: An act relating to nuclear power generation in the state plan submitted to the United States environmental protection agency under the clean power plan.

Brief Description: Regarding nuclear power generation in the state plan submitted to the United States environmental protection agency under the clean power plan.

Sponsors: Senators Brown, Braun, Hewitt, Rivers and Sheldon.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Energy, Environment & Telecommunications: 1/20/16, 1/20/16 [DP, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Ericksen, Chair; Sheldon, Vice Chair; Braun, Brown and Honeyford.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators McCoy, Ranking Minority Member; Cleveland and Habib.

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

Background: The Clean Power Plan. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) set carbon pollution limits for the nation's existing power plants in August 2015. EPA's rule is called the Clean Power Plan (CPP), and was issued under Section 111(d) of the Clean Air Act. EPA's rule establishes state-specific goals to reduce carbon pollution from existing power plants. States are required to develop plans that ensure they achieve the carbon pollution reduction goals. The goals are based on each state's unique mix of emissions and power sources. States have flexibility to choose how to achieve the carbon pollution reduction goal. State goals may be met with new nuclear generation, which includes new nuclear reactors that come online and existing facilities that expand their capacity - also known as uprates.

Small Modular Reactor (SMR). A traditional base-load nuclear power plant generates 1000 MW or more of electricity, while an SMR is a nuclear power plant designed to generate 300

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.

megawatts (MW) or less. An SMR is also designed to be factory-fabricated and transportable by truck or rail to a nuclear power site. The U.S. Department of Energy has a program to advance the certification and licensing of domestic SMR designs.

Summary of Bill: The Legislature finds that in the CPP, the EPA determined that (1) electricity generation for new nuclear generating capacity can replace fossil fuel-fired generation, and (2) incremental zero-emitting generation from new or uprated nuclear capacity is expected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and play a key role in state plans.

Any state plan for Washington submitted to the EPA pursuant to the CPP or any rule adopted under the CPP must provide for the use of new or uprated nuclear generation, including SMRs. An SMR is defined as a scalable nuclear power plant using reactors that each have a gross power output no greater than 300 MW electric, and where each reactor is designed for factory manufacturing and ease of transport.

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: EPA talks about opportunities for nuclear power. This bill puts nuclear as part of CPP to be submitted to EPA. New nuclear generation can help support reduction in GHG. Only a combined strategy of nuclear and renewables can meet our carbon reduction goals. Twenty percent of electricity provided to the nation is nuclear. The Department of Energy announced major new investment in nuclear energy. Commercial nuclear generation does not harm our environment. Wind is slightly cleaner than nuclear. Nuclear is slightly cleaner than hydro. The output of nuclear is tremendous. The Columbia Generating Station can power all of Seattle and most of the surrounding areas.

CON: It is premature to decide to add nuclear 10 to 15 years down the road to the CPP. Our concerns with nuclear power is the inability of the U.S. to permanently store waste generated from nuclear generation. There is no current repository for highly radioactive waste. As a result of defaults on former nuclear facilities, Washington voters passed a law to prevent building facilities with an electric generating capacity over 350 MW without statewide approval. A statewide vote is needed to create a SMR plant.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Brown, prime sponsor; Michael PAOLI, Energy Northwest / Chief Communication Officer.

CON: Charles Johnson, OR/WA Physicians for Social Responsibility.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.