

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1584

As of March 6, 2023

Title: An act relating to planning for advanced nuclear reactor technology in Washington.

Brief Description: Planning for advanced nuclear reactor technology in Washington.

Sponsors: House Committee on Environment & Energy (originally sponsored by Representatives Barnard, Fitzgibbon, Dye, Donaghy, Lekanoff, Slatter, Ybarra, Couture, Fey, Ryu, Riccelli, Berry, Schmidt, Sandlin and Timmons).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/28/23, 91-6.

Committee Activity: Environment, Energy & Technology: 3/10/23.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Modifies a guiding principle for the State Energy Strategy to include the consideration of advanced nuclear reactor technology, renewable natural gas, and green electrolytic hydrogen to reduce the state's dependence on fossil fuel energy sources, and removes the consideration of natural gas from the list of resources.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY & TECHNOLOGY

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

Background: Washington State Energy Strategy. In 2019, the Legislature directed the Department of Commerce (Commerce) to revise the State Energy Strategy (SES) to align the strategy with the requirements of the Energy Independence Act, the Clean Energy Transformation Act, and the state's greenhouse gas emissions reduction limits. The Legislature established a 27-member advisory committee to review the strategy and provide guidance to Commerce.

State law declares that a successful SES balances the following three goals:

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- maintaining competitive energy prices that are fair and reasonable for consumers and businesses, and support our state's continued economic success;
- increasing competitiveness by fostering a clean energy economy and jobs through business and workforce development; and
- meeting the state's obligations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

To meet these goals the Legislature lays out nine principles to guide strategy development and implementation. One of these nine principles directs the state to reduce dependence on fossil fuel energy sources through improved efficiency and development of cleaner energy sources, such as bioenergy, low carbon energy sources, natural gas, and leveraging the indigenous resources of the state for the production of clean energy.

The 2021 SES references nuclear energy. In particular, it notes that research and innovation efforts might yield efficiency gains or cost reductions for several technologies, including nuclear power generation.

Nuclear Energy. Nuclear energy comes from splitting atoms to produce heat that can be used to generate electricity. As an example, most nuclear reactors operating today heat water and produce steam that is then used to turn a turbine to generate electricity. According to the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, "small modular reactors and other advanced reactors are expected to reduce economic, security, technical, perceived safety, and regulatory barriers to the accelerated establishment in the United States of the next generation of nuclear power."

Summary of Bill: Renewable natural gas, green electrolytic hydrogen, and advance nuclear reactor technology are added to, and natural gas is removed from, the list of resources to consider under the SES guiding principle to reduce dependence on fossil fuel energy sources.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.