

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5838

AS PASSED SENATE, MARCH 12, 1993

Brief Description: Creating an energy siting process review committee.

SPONSORS: Senators Sutherland, Williams and Roach

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Sutherland, Chairman; Jesernig, Vice Chairman; Amondson, Hochstatter, McCaslin, Roach, A. Smith, Vognild, West, and Williams.

Staff: Phil Moeller (786-7445)

Hearing Dates: February 25, 1993

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES

BACKGROUND:

The Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC) is an entity created by the Legislature to provide a one-stop permitting review process for large energy production or transmission facilities. EFSEC was created in the 1970's when projected electrical demand led energy policy officials to plan several large power plants throughout the region. The membership of EFSEC consists mainly of state agency directors or their designees. EFSEC is staffed by the Washington State Energy Office.

For the siting of electricity-producing power plants, EFSEC has a threshold under which projects are not considered. This threshold is 250 annual average megawatts (MW) roughly one-fourth the power needs of a city the size of Seattle. If a proposed plant is designed to produce at least 250 MW it must go through the EFSEC process; if it produces less, it is not considered by EFSEC and goes through a permit review process by various federal, state and local jurisdictions.

Over the past decade (with only two exceptions) all newly proposed energy projects in the state have been designed under the 250 MW threshold. Several of these projects are designed to produce just under 250 MW.

Most of the recently-proposed energy production and transmission projects in this state have faced some degree of local opposition. The opposition has arisen for all types of projects, including transmission lines, substations, small hydropower projects, wind generating facilities, and others.

The Washington Energy Strategy Committee, in its final report of January, 1993, stated that the siting process for energy projects in this state is dysfunctional. The Strategy Committee recommended an intensive review of the current process.

SUMMARY:

An energy siting process review committee is created. The committee is charged with reviewing the siting process applicable to major thermal plants, combustion turbines, cogeneration facilities, hydroelectric facilities, natural gas pipelines, electric transmission lines, and renewable energy sources including wind, solar, geothermal and biomass.

Membership of the 12 person committee shall consist of two members from both the House of Representatives and the Senate, three members representing citizens at large, and five additional members, each representing one of the following entities: local governments; electric utilities; natural gas utilities; environmental organizations; and independent power producers. The chair of the committee shall be selected from the members representing citizens at large.

The committee shall report its findings and any proposed legislation to the Governor and appropriate legislative standing committees by December 1, 1993.

The Washington State Energy Office shall provide staff support to the committee.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: requested February 25, 1993

TESTIMONY FOR:

The siting process for energy facilities is not working. Creating a committee to re-examine these issues should contribute toward finding solutions.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: Jim Waldo, State Energy Strategy Committee (pro); Jim Harding, State Energy Office (pro)

HOUSE AMENDMENT(S):

A striking amendment was adopted. The amendment increases the membership of the committee to 15 by: 1) replacing the member representing local governments with one member representing cities and another representing counties; 2) replacing the member representing electric utilities with one member representing publicly-owned electric utilities and another representing privately-owned electric utilities; and 3) replacing the member representing natural gas utilities with

one member representing local distribution gas utilities and one member representing natural gas pipeline companies.

The amendment clarifies that legislative members are to represent the four caucuses and that gubernatorial appointees are to represent the various geographic regions of the state.

The amendment adds the timely siting, recognition of federal licensing and permitting authorities, and energy system reliability to the list of areas the committee is to study and about which the committee is to submit recommendations.

Technical language is included to clarify payment of travel expenses for committee members.