

SENATE BILL REPORT

HJM 4039

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Energy, Telecommunications & Utilities, February 21, 1996

Brief Description: Requesting that the Hanford Fast Flux Facility be preserved.

Sponsors: Representatives Hankins, Patterson, Delvin, Mitchell, Blanton, Cairnes, Skinner, Crouse, Chandler, Mastin, Kessler, Casada, Grant and Thompson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Energy, Telecommunications & Utilities: 2/21/96 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, TELECOMMUNICATIONS & UTILITIES

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Sutherland, Chair; Loveland, Vice Chair; Finkbeiner, Hochstatter and Owen.

Staff: Phil Moeller (786-7445)

Background: The Fast Flux Test Facility (FFTF) is a 400-megawatt, sodium-cooled, fast-flux test reactor owned by United States Department of Energy (USDOE) and located on the Hanford Reservation near Richland. "Fast flux" means the neutrons move faster in a sodium-cooled reactor than they would if the reactor were cooled with water. The FFTF was designed and operated as a test reactor and has no capability to generate electric power, although the steam it discharges could conceivably be captured and used if a steam-driven electricity generator were constructed nearby.

Built in 1980, the FFTF was designed primarily to test fuels and materials for advanced nuclear power plants, specifically, the effects of radiation on fuels and materials. The FFTF also was used for research and testing of alloys and other materials for a variety of uses and to study and demonstrate isotope production. The FFTF was credited with producing, in 1986, the purest gadolinium-153 (used to diagnose osteoporosis) ever made. During the late 1980s, other isotopes reportedly were produced in the FFTF for cancer treatment and diagnostic research, and for cardiovascular and brain studies.

After no long-term mission for the FFTF was identified, the USDOE placed the facility in standby status in April 1992. In late September 1993, a review team recommended the FFTF be shut down permanently.

There is private sector interest in attempting to purchase or lease the FFTF and use it to produce tritium for use by the Department of Defense, to produce medical and agricultural isotopes, and for other purposes as well.

Summary of Bill: The memorial calls on the President of the United States and Congress to ensure the restart, continued operation, and preservation of the FFTF.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Testimony For: The FFTF is a national resource that should be maintained for a variety of missions, including the production of isotopes for cancer treatment.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Hankins, prime sponsor.