

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## HJM 4022

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As of February 15, 2000

**Brief Description:** Requesting full funding for a vitrification treatment plant at the Hanford site.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Delvin, Hankins, G. Chandler, B. Chandler, Mastin, Lisk, Grant, Linville and Mitchell.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Energy, Technology & Telecommunications: 2/17/2000.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, TECHNOLOGY & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

**Staff:** Andrea McNamara (786-7483)

**Background:** In October 1993, the Hanford Site, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and local parties signed an amendment to the Hanford Tri-Party Agreement outlining a plan to use vitrification to solidify high-level and low-level waste stored on the 560 square mile Hanford Site in Southeastern Washington near Richland.

Fifty-four million gallons of high-level radioactive waste is stored on site in 177 underground single-wall and double-wall tanks, each approximately the size of a football field (300 x 160 feet, and 150 feet high). The waste includes highly-radioactive sludge and less radioactive liquids.

Vitrification involves heating the wastes to extreme temperatures by running electrical current through them, adding glass-forming chemicals, and then extracting the molten glass and shaping it into logs as it cools and solidifies. Although the process does not reduce radioactivity, vitrification changes the form of waste from a leachable sludge into an immobile solid.

The vitrification facility at Hanford will be the largest radioactive waste melter in the world. At a cost of approximately \$3 billion, construction is scheduled to begin in approximately 2002, and the facility is slated to begin operating in 2007.

**Summary of Bill:** The President and the Congress are requested to provide full funding as necessary to build the vitrification plant, retrieve waste from the tanks, feed the waste into the plant, and dispose of the resulting glass logs on schedule to meet the negotiated dates contained in the Tri-Party Agreement.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.