

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5092

As of February 13, 2015

Title: An act relating to including nuclear energy in the principles that guide development and implementation of the state's energy strategy.

Brief Description: Including nuclear energy in the principles that guide development and implementation of the state's energy strategy.

Sponsors: Senators Brown, Hewitt and Sheldon.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Energy, Environment & Telecommunications: 2/12/15.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Staff: William Bridges (786-7416)

Background: State Energy Strategy. Required since 1991, the state energy strategy is used to inform legislation, regulations, taxation, and other public policies. The Department of Commerce is charged with periodically reviewing the state energy strategy with the guidance of an advisory committee representing different regions and interests around the state. Any recommended revisions to the energy strategy are subject to a public hearing and a written report must be produced by the department and conveyed to the Governor and appropriate legislative committees.

Only two comprehensive energy strategies have been produced, one in 1993 and the other in 2012; although updates were released in 2003 and 2011.

Guiding Principles for the State Energy Strategy. The guiding principles are set forth in statute; for example:

- Reduce dependence on fossil fuel energy sources through improved efficiency and development of cleaner energy sources, such as bioenergy, low-carbon energy sources, and natural gas, and leveraging the indigenous resources of the state for the production of clean energy.

Nuclear energy is not mentioned in the guiding principles of the state energy strategy.

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.

Summary of Bill: Adds Nuclear Energy to the State Energy Strategy. Nuclear energy is included as a clean energy source in the guiding principles of the state energy strategy.

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: It is important for nuclear energy to be included in the state energy strategy. Nuclear energy plants operate in 31 states and they provide one of every five homes and businesses with electricity. Nuclear energy is carbon free and it has among the lowest environmental impacts of any energy source. Nuclear energy has the best energy return on energy invested, and it is the only energy source that accounts for all of its waste. Washington has a high standard of living with the cleanest energy in all the world. The nuclear expertise in this state is unique, which makes the state well suited for nuclear power. Nuclear energy is a vital way to insure the reduction of carbon and other detrimental pollutants. Energy and capacity will be the new world currency and nuclear energy should be a legitimate part of the nation's portfolio. The SMR planned for Idaho is on track and Energy Northwest will operate it. France is 80 percent nuclear and it has the cleanest air and power in Europe.

CON: Nuclear energy is not clean because of uranium mining and nuclear waste. There are health effects associated with radiation exposure. The state should encourage solar energy and other renewables that do not have waste. SMRs are not as efficient as larger power plants. It is premature to consider SMRs. In all this nuclear boosterism, there is no mention of Fukushima. Lightwater reactors have been shut down in Germany and Japan. Ratepayers should be protected from this nuclear gamble, which the state should be sensitive to given the experience of the Washington Public Power Supply System. Less waste does not mean no waste, and safer does not mean safe. Pursuing nuclear energy will lead to a financial cesspool.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Brown, prime sponsor; Carl Holder, American Nuclear Society, Eastern WA Section; James Conca, UFA Ventures, Inc.; Allan Ewrhart; Vic Parrish, Myself; Dale Atkinson, NuScale Power, LLC; James Gaston, Energy NW; Michael Luzzo, Robert L. Benededetti, Allan Ewrhart, Vic Parrish, citizens.

CON: Charles Johnson, Thomas Buchanan, Steven Gilbert, WA Physicians for Social Responsibility; Susan Sunshine, Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation; Chuck Schultz, citizen.