

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5467

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Energy, Environment & Telecommunications, February 9, 2017

Title: An act relating to including nuclear energy in the definition of a "qualified alternative energy resource" for the purposes of RCW 19.29A.090.

Brief Description: Including nuclear energy in the definition of a "qualified alternative energy resource" for the purposes of RCW 19.29A.090.

Sponsors: Senators Brown, Baumgartner, Rivers, King, Takko, Miloscia, Bailey, Ericksen, Angel, Honeyford, Becker, Braun, Padden, Hobbs, Wilson and Schoesler.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Energy, Environment & Telecommunications: 2/09/17, 2/09/17 [DP, DNP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Adds nuclear energy as a qualified alternative energy resource for the purposes of the voluntary green power program.
- Requires billing statements to specify the percentage of electricity provided by nuclear energy and other qualified alternative energy resources.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Ericksen, Chair; Sheldon, Vice Chair; Brown, Hobbs, Honeyford and Short.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Carlyle, Ranking Minority Member; Wellman.

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

Background: Voluntary Green Power Program. All electric utilities in the state, other than small electric utilities, must offer their customers the option to purchase qualified alternative

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.

energy resources. A qualified alternative energy resource is electricity or thermal energy that is produced by a facility fueled by:

- wind;
- solar energy;
- geothermal energy;
- landfill gas;
- wave or tidal action;
- wastewater treatment gas;
- qualified hydropower; and
- biomass energy.

Annual Reports. Electric utilities must maintain information relating to their voluntary green power programs and make available the information to the Department of Commerce or the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission, which in turn must report the information to the appropriate committees of the Legislature upon request.

Summary of Bill: Adding Nuclear Energy as a Qualified Alternative Energy Resource Under the Voluntary Green Power Program. For the purposes of the voluntary green power program, a qualified alternative energy resource includes a facility that produces electricity or thermal energy from nuclear energy. Billing statements for residential customers must specify the percentage of electricity provided by nuclear energy and by other qualified alternative energy resources.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Nuclear energy is clean. It's safe according to the World Health Organization. Metals used for solar power are mined in unstable countries. We are experiencing a brain drain because the people with expertise in Washington are headed to Oregon and Idaho. Nuclear is clean, affordable, and best for removing carbon. If the Columbia Generating Station were replaced with natural gas, it would generate 3.8 million metric tons of carbon, which is equal to 600,000 vehicles on the road. Nuclear can be used for electricity 24-7. It is available 93 percent of the time while hydro is available 50 percent and solar is 25 percent.

CON: This bill is not necessary. It is a solution in search of a problem. No nuclear plant is being proposed in Washington. Energy Northwest is under a guaranteed contract with the Bonneville Power Administration. The addition of nuclear energy would undermine the statute's intent to protect consumers. Construction, mining, milling, disposal, and decommissioning of nuclear power is heavily dependent on fossil fuels. Waste disposal poses a risk to the environment and consumers. Nuclear power is the worst possible option. Plutonium lasts a exceedingly long time and is exceedingly dangerous. We need to remember previous nuclear accidents. Carbon is less dangerous.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Sharon Brown, Prime Sponsor; Brent Ridge, Energy Northwest.

CON: Charles Johnson, Director, Task Force on Nuclear Power, Washington and Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility; Cathryn Chudy, Oregon Conservancy Foundations; Elyette Weinstein, League of Women Voters; Michael Brunson, citizen.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.