

5717-S

Sponsor(s): Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Brown, T. Sheldon, Fraser, Regala, Kline, Franklin, Winsley, Kohl-Welles, Shin, McAuliffe, Spanel, Costa, B. Sheldon and Rasmussen)

Brief Description: Funding the low-income energy assistance program.

SB 5717-S - DIGEST

(AS OF SENATE 2ND READING 2/7/01)

Finds that: (1) The state is experiencing dramatic increases in the costs of electricity and natural gas, with increases averaging between thirty and seventy percent, as a result of many factors out of the state's direct control.

(2) These unprecedented price increases have a disproportionate impact on the low-income citizens of the state because energy costs comprise a larger percentage of their available resources than families with moderate and higher incomes and approximately seventy-five percent of low-income homes use electric heat.

(3) Every year, the state's low-income energy assistance program exhausts its resources before the end of the heating season. Typically, only seventeen percent of the eligible population is served in an average year.

(4) Requests for assistance are expected to increase by over forty percent this winter, and the amount of heating assistance each household will need will also rise.

(5) While the state has received emergency allocations from the federal government, the combined circumstances of increased need for help and the increased cost of energy make it likely that, even with the emergency federal assistance, fewer citizens will be served.

Declares an intent to provide immediate assistance to help mitigate the adverse consequences of this winter's rate increases on Washington's low-income citizens.

Appropriates the sum of two million dollars, or as much thereof as may be necessary, from the general fund to the department of community, trade, and economic development for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2001, for the low-income home energy assistance program.

Appropriates the sum of four million dollars, or as much thereof as may be necessary, from the general fund--federal to the department of community, trade, and economic development for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2001, for energy assistance under the low-income home energy assistance program.