

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5113

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Energy, Environment & Telecommunications, February 18, 2015

Title: An act relating to requiring the department of commerce to coordinate and advance the siting and manufacturing of small modular reactors in the state to meet future energy supply, environmental, and energy security needs.

Brief Description: Requiring the department of commerce to coordinate and advance the siting and manufacturing of small modular reactors in the state to meet future energy supply, environmental, and energy security needs.

Sponsors: Senator Brown.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Energy, Environment & Telecommunications: 2/12/15, 2/18/15 [DPS, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5113 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators McCoy, Ranking Minority Member; Cleveland, Habib and Ranker.

Staff: William Bridges (786-7416)

Background: Energy Duties of the Department of Commerce. The department provides energy policy support, analysis, and information for the Governor, Legislature, and other agencies. The department also coordinates and implements the state's energy strategy and energy-related emergency preparedness in the state.

Small Modular Reactor (SMR). A traditional base-load nuclear power plant generates 1000 megawatts (MW) or more of electricity, while an SMR is a nuclear power plant designed to generate 300 MW or less. An SMR is also designed to be factory-fabricated and transportable by truck or rail to a nuclear power site. The U.S. Department of Energy has a program to advance the certification and licensing of domestic SMR designs.

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.

SMR Study. The 2013-15 Capital Budget – ESSB 5035, appropriated \$500,000 for the development of an SMR proposal by the Tri-City Development Council. A final report was issued in September 2014, which concluded, among other things, that siting an SMR at Hanford would be technically feasible.

Joint Select Task Force on Nuclear Energy (Task Force). The 2014 Legislature created the Task Force to study, among other things, the generation of energy in the region through the use of nuclear power. As part of its activities, the Task Force visited an SMR development company in Corvallis, Oregon in November 2014.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): The Department of Commerce must coordinate and advance the siting and manufacturing of SMRs in the state to meet future energy supply, environmental, and energy security needs.

SMR means (1) a scalable nuclear power plant using reactors each with a gross power output no greater than 300 MW of electricity; (2) where each reactor is designed for factory manufacturing and ease of transport, such as by truck, rail, or barge.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT & TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): Changes the definition of SMR.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: PRO: Washington is a leader in nuclear expertise and the state is in danger of being left behind by other states trying to lure SMRs. The state's congressional delegation supports nuclear energy. Nuclear energy is not a partisan issue. Nuclear energy is safe, far safer than flying in airplanes or sailing on ships. Not only does nuclear energy generate carbon-free electricity but it also produces high-paying jobs. SMRs have been around a long time and they have proven safe. NuScale is on schedule with testing occurring in Germany, Italy, and Oregon. Washington has manufacturing and training capabilities that could be used to manufacture SMRs. The closure of coal plants in the west will require new baseload power that SMRs can supply. The Energy Northwest site at Hanford would be ideal for an SMR.

CON: SMRs are not safe, not cost effective, may promote nuclear weapons proliferation, and create dangerous nuclear waste. Nuclear energy is not carbon free, and produces radiation and dangerous waste. Nuclear energy is not safe and how dare you consider it. Nuclear energy is all about profits.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Brown, prime sponsor; Dale Atkinson, NuScale Power, LLC; James Gaston, Energy NW; Carl Adrian, Tri-City Development Council; Michael Luzzo, Allan Ewrhart, Vic Parrish, citizens.

CON: Charles Johnson, Thomas Buchanan, Steven Gilbert, WA Physicians for Social Responsibility; Marcia Leister, Mary Abramson, citizens.