

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6568

As of February 15, 2008

Title: An act relating to nuclear energy.

Brief Description: Creating the joint legislative task force on nuclear energy.

Sponsors: Senators Delvin, Pridemore, Morton, Hatfield, Honeyford, Hobbs, Tom, Shin, Roach and Sheldon.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Water, Energy & Telecommunications: 2/06/08.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER, ENERGY & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Staff: Scott Boettcher (786-7416)

Background: There are about 440 commercial nuclear reactors operating in 31 countries around the world today. This generates electricity for nearly 1 billion people, and 17 percent of world electrical production. Presently, about 30 non-domestic plants are under construction.

In the U.S., there are about 104 commercial reactors in operation. These supply about 20 percent of U.S. energy. Washington has one commercial reactor in the state, the Columbia Generating Station. As of 2007 the last new commercial nuclear reactor to come on-line was the Watts Bar 1 reactor in Tennessee which came on-line in February 1996.

Concerns over future energy resources, climate change, air quality, and energy security have brought about a renewed interest in the creation and generation of additional domestic commercial nuclear capacity.

The U.S. Department of Energy (US DOE) has initiated development by 2021 of "Generation IV" or "Next Generation Nuclear Plants" (NGNP). The international nuclear community has established the following goals for NGNP: improve nuclear safety; improve proliferation resistance; minimize waste and natural resource utilization; and decrease cost to build and operate.

Key federal regulatory agencies that oversee commercial nuclear generation include: the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission; US DOE; the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; the U.S. Food and Drug Administration; and the U.S. Department of Transportation. Key state agencies include: the Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council; and the Washington State Department of Ecology.

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: The Joint Legislative Task Force (Task Force) on Nuclear Energy is created. The purpose of the Task Force is to study the feasibility of pursuing additional nuclear capacity in Washington. The Task Force must: (1) examine advanced nuclear generation, including generation III and IV nuclear technologies; (2) review advanced nuclear generation in operation in other countries; (3) examine spent fuel recycling options; (4) review safety issues associated with operating advanced nuclear reactors; (5) examine and compare per kilowatt costs against other energy sources like wind, solar, hydroelectric, and coal; (6) examine licensing and permitting costs associated with construction and operation; (7) review potential tax incentives for advanced nuclear technologies; and (8) report findings and recommendations to the Legislature by December 1, 2008.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: Yes.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Nuclear power can provide a good source to meet baseload demand without generating greenhouse gas emissions. Other countries like Russia, France, Japan, and soon Canada are finding ways to waste and spent fuel. The bill is an important step for Washington.

OTHER: Nuclear energy can be an energy source to replace coal demand and help with climate change and greenhouse gas emissions. Will need 5,000 megawatts to meet growing demand. Wind, conservation, and nuclear power together can provide a mix to meet growing demand and help with climate change.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Brad Peck, Energy Northwest.

OTHER: Todd Myers, Washington Policy Center.