SB 990 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Energy and Environment

Prepared By: Beth Reiley, LPRO Analyst
Meeting Dates: 5/24

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Exempts small modular reactors from certain siting restrictions that apply to nuclear-fueled thermal power plants. Requires small modular reactors to be sited in a city or county where the electors have approved of small modular reactors being located. Requires emergency planning zones for small modular reactors to be located in a county where the electors have approved of their location. Requires proposed disposal of high-level radioactive waste by small modular reactors to comport with the process approved or adopted by the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Fiscal Impact: Has Minimal Fiscal Impact
Revenue Impact: No Revenue Impact

Passed.Ayes, 25; nays, 4--Dembrow, Frederick, Manning Jr, Monnes Anderson; excused, 1--Baertschiger Jr.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

BACKGROUND:

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures fourteen states have currently placed some type of restrictions on the construction of new nuclear power facilities: California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont and West Virginia.a Aproximately 20 percent of the nation's electricity and 60 percent of the nation's carbon-free electricity is generated by commercial nuclear reactors. Small modular reactors (SMRs) are nuclear power plants that are smaller in size (generally 300 megawatt electric, or MWe) than typical base load nuclear power plants (typically 1,000 MWe or higher). These SMRs feature simple, compact designs and have condensed site footprints, with the reactors housed underground. These reactors are small enough to have major components assembled in factories and shipped by truck, rail or barge and assembled on site. Nuclear power plants, including SMRs, generate heat through nuclear fission, which occurs when the unstable nucleus of fissile material (such as Uranium-235) absorbs a free neutron released by another atom and is split into two atoms of lighter elements as well as additional free neutrons. Heat generated by a sustained fission chain reaction can be used to generate electricity.