



Sustainably Reliable

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Gov. signs bill to include heat in renewable energy options

OLYMPIA, WA – Today Governor Christine Gregoire signed a bill that allows renewable thermal energy to qualify for renewable energy credits.

The bill also requires utilities to add renewable thermal energy to the list of alternative energy resources they provide for customers to purchase. These sources include: biomass heating through boilers, geothermal or ground-source heating, solar heating, heat recovery and reuse at wastewater treatment facilities.

According to the Department of Commerce, over half of the energy consumed in Washington each year is wasted as heat. The bill provides additional financial incentive for utilities and private companies to produce useful thermal energy from additional sources beyond natural gas and fossil fuels.

Sponsored by Rep. Jeff Morris (D-Anacortes), the bill passed the House 97-0 and the Senate 47-1. The bill was supported by environmental groups, utilities, municipal organizations and private developers.

“This bill changes the way people think about energy. Until now, when people said renewable energy they just meant electricity. Now, we’re changing the conversation to include thermal resources,” said Chuck Collins, CEO of Cascade Power Group, a Bellevue-based energy conservation and renewable energy project-development company supporting the bill.

“We commend the leadership in Washington State for their overwhelming support for this common sense legislation that recognizes the economic and environmental value of thermal energy. This bill will help to unleash investment in highly efficient and environmentally responsible solutions, strengthen local economies and sets a standard for other states to follow,” said Robert Thornton, CEO of International District Energy Association.

“Sometimes small steps lead to progress faster than giant leaps; today is the first small step in understanding that thermal energy has a much greater role to play in a sustainable energy future for Washington State. Understanding how district energy — where renewable heat or waste heat from industry can be used to heat properties — opens the door to new ways to use today’s technology for future cost effective sustainable solutions,” said Stan Gent, CEO and President of Seattle Steam Company.

The thermal renewable energy credits will be offered to customers through voluntary utility green power programs, and will not count towards the state renewable portfolio standard. In 2010, over 50,000 customers purchased over 50 megawatt-hours of renewable energy credits through voluntary utility programs.

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