



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF WASHINGTON

Empowering all Washingtonians to engage in a more responsible and responsive democracy

2018 ISSUE PAPER – ENERGY

Pending Issues for the 2018 Legislative Session

- Oppose legislation that allows utilities to apply traditional energy sources toward the EIA requirement that large utilities obtain a percentage of their electricity from non-traditional renewable energy resources;
- Support legislative efforts to update and extend the Energy Independence Act (EIA) past 2020;
- Support legislation that facilitates distributed energy resource (DER) development;
- Oppose legislation that promotes construction of new dams;
- Oppose legislation that promotes construction of new nuclear power plants.

Background: Energy Independence Act: I-937:

I-937 (RCW 19.285) requires that large utilities obtain 15% of their electricity from non-traditional renewable energy resources by 2020. The Act specifies which energy resources can be credited toward the portion (Percentage Requirement) of electricity that power plants must generate from non-traditional renewable energy sources. Essentially, these resources are defined as:

- a. Electricity from a facility powered by a renewable resource other than freshwater. This restriction applies only if the facility is built after March 31,1999;
- b. Electricity incrementally produced by efficiency improvements to hydroelectric projects built after March 31,1999;
- c. Hydroelectric energy generated from a project, completed after March 31,1999, that primarily conveys water for municipal use and/or carries wastewater;
- d. Qualified biomass energy.

As indicated above, the EIA encourages the development of new renewable energy resources rather than traditional resources like hydropower and fossil fuels.

Oppose legislation that allows utilities to apply traditional energy sources toward meeting the EIA’s Renewable Energy Percentage Requirement

After I-937’s passage in 2006, state legislators have mostly rejected continuing proposals to change the law to credit utilities’ conservation efforts and traditional energy sources against the Percentage Requirement referenced above. In 2017 lawmakers passed a limited credit against the Percentage Requirement for qualified biomass energy in a specific instance.

Proposals to qualify traditional energy sources as meeting the Percentage Requirement will likely be submitted during the 2018 Legislative Session.

The League of Women Voters of Washington (LWVWA) does not support exceptions that allow conservation efforts or other forms of energy to qualify toward meeting the Percentage Requirement. LWVWA Energy Position (EN) 6, states: “...The use of renewable energy systems such as solar, wind and recovery of energy from wastes should be actively encouraged.”

Update and extend the Energy Independence Act past 2020.

The EIA's requirement that utilities meet the Percentage Requirement with non-traditional renewable energy will end in 2020. LWVWA supports legislation to require that after 2020, utilities providing power in Washington state derive an increasing portion of their energy from non-traditional renewable resources, see: EN 6, above.

Support Facilitation of Distributed Energy Resource (DER) Systems

LWVWA supports legislation that facilitates the growth of distributed energy resource (DER) systems. DER's are smaller, on-site power sources that can be aggregated to provide power necessary to meet regular demand. They can be connected to the existing electricity grid.

DER systems are decentralized, modular and more flexible than traditional power plants. For example, because distributed energy doesn't have to travel long distances to meet the needs of a particular site, DER systems don't need to generate as much energy as a centralized plant. Therefore, they can rely more on combinations of renewable energy and battery storage to meet regular and power surge demands.

Since they can increase the use of renewable energy, DER systems further the goal of LWVWA Energy Position (EN) 6: "...The use of renewable energy systems such as solar, wind and recovery of energy from wastes should be actively encouraged."

Oppose Legislation that Promotes New Dam Construction

As in previous legislative sessions, the 2018 Session may include proposals to construct new dams to meet power needs.

LWVWA does not support new dam construction before conservation efforts are used to address energy needs. If such efforts cannot meet power needs, the Legislature must consider potential health, safety and environmental impacts before it approves new dam construction.

EN 4 states:

"A state energy policy should be formulated with particular regard to encouraging changes in lifestyle including changes in transportation and land-use patterns; maintaining human health and safety; preserving the environment and conserving natural resources."

Oppose Legislation that Supports New Nuclear Energy Facilities

As in previous legislative sessions, the 2018 Session may include proposals to construct new nuclear energy plants to meet power needs.

LWVWA does not support nuclear plant construction without initial conservation efforts to address energy needs. If conservation efforts do not meet energy needs, the Legislature must consider health, safety and environmental impacts before it approves nuclear plant construction. (See: EN 4 quoted immediately above).

EN-5 specifies: "... Reliance on additional nuclear thermal plants as a major source must answer the public's concern about adequate and safe nuclear waste disposal."

Contact Information: Elyette Weinstein, 360-791-5840, eweinstein@lwvwa.org