Assembly Joint Resolution  No. 35

Introduced by Assembly Member Williams

March 26, 2012

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 35—Relative to rail transport of coal.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL’S DIGEST

AJR 35, as introduced, Williams. Rail transport: coal.
This measure urges the President of the United States and the 112th Congress to enact legislation to restrict the waterborne export transshipment of coal for electricity generation to any nation that fails to adopt rules and regulations on the emissions of greenhouse gases and airborne hazardous air pollutants that are at least as restrictive as those adopted by the United States. The measure would urge the Governor of California to inform the Governors of the States of Oregon and Washington of the significant health risks to the people of the Pacific Coast states if large coal export terminals and rail car coal transport expansions are licensed and permitted to operate on or near the coast of the States of Oregon and Washington.
Fiscal committee: yes.

WHEREAS, California law requires electricity providers to procure not less than 33 percent of retail sales of electricity from renewable energy resources by December 31, 2020; and
WHEREAS, California has emerged as a global leader in the transition from fossil fuel dependence to a clean energy economy; and
WHEREAS, California law limits long-term investments in baseload generation by utilities to powerplants that meet strict
greenhouse gas emissions standards. According to the State Energy
Resources Conservation and Development Commission, currently
no existing coal plant has demonstrated that it complies with the
greenhouse gas emissions limit on long-term investments in
baseload generation; and
WHEREAS, The United States Environmental Protection
Agency in December 2011 issued regulations requiring coal-fired
powerplants to significantly reduce emissions of mercury, arsenic,
and other toxic pollutants within four years; and
WHEREAS, Hazardous emissions from coal powerplants
threaten health locally and at great distances; and
WHEREAS, Coal exports from United States ports to Asia have
risen by almost 240 percent from 3.8 million tons in 2009 to over
13 million tons in 2010; and
WHEREAS, The environmental consequences of massive coal
exports to Asia are severe, including the burning of millions of
tons of coal into the atmosphere, increased mountaintop removal
projects, and the extrusion of coal dust from open rail cars,
contaminating adjoining communities and waterways with toxic
and carcinogenic substances; and
WHEREAS, Burning coal for electricity generation worldwide
is the main cause of global warming pollution and the planetary
climate crisis; and
WHEREAS, Coal burning has contributed to significant human
health risks in all age groups through the emissions of ozone, sulfur
dioxide (SO₂), particulate matter, nitrogen oxides (NOₓ), mercury,
and carbon dioxide (CO₂); now, therefore, be it
Resolved by the Assembly and the Senate of the State of
California, jointly, That the Legislature urges the President of the
United States and the 112th Congress to enact legislation to restrict
the waterborne export transshipment of coal for electricity
generation to any nation that fails to adopt rules and regulations
on the emissions of greenhouse gases or airborne hazardous air
pollutants that are at least as restrictive as those adopted by the
United States; and be it further
Resolved, That the Legislature urges the Governor of California
to inform the Governors of the States of Oregon and Washington
of the significant health risks to the people of the Pacific Coast
states if large coal export terminals, and rail car coal transport
expansions, are licensed and permitted to operate on or near the coast of the States of Oregon and Washington; and be it further
Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United States, the President pro Tempore of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, to each Senator and Representative from California in the Congress of the United States, and to the author for appropriate distribution.