

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 6133

As Passed House:
February 28, 2012

Title: An act relating to requiring training for eligibility for certain electrician certifications.

Brief Description: Requiring training for eligibility for certain electrician certifications.

Sponsors: Senators Conway, Roach, Kohl-Welles, Nelson, Kline and Keiser.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Labor & Workforce Development: 2/15/12, 2/21/12 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/28/12, 56-42.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires journeyman and specialty electricians to complete a specified number of hours of in-class education to receive a certificate of competency.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Sells, Chair; Reykdal, Vice Chair; Green, Kenney, Miloscia, Moeller, Ormsby and Roberts.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Condotta, Ranking Minority Member; Shea, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Taylor and Warnick.

Staff: Joan Elgee (786-7106).

Background:

The Department of Labor and Industries (Department) administers electrical contracting and certification laws. To work as an electrician, a person must possess a certificate of competency issued by the Department. There are several types of certificates, including journeyman electrician and specialty electrician. Journeyman and specialty electricians must meet work experience requirements and take an exam. To take the journeyman electrician

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.

exam, a person must have 8,000 hours of work experience. Specialty electrician applicants must have either 2,000 or 4,000 hours of work experience to take the exam. Persons may alternatively go through an apprenticeship program to gain work experience. In addition, completion of a community or technical college, or trade school program, may be substituted for some of the work experience.

Persons learning the electrical trade obtain a trainee certificate, which must be renewed biennially. Trainees must obtain classroom training to renew a trainee certificate. In 2010 the Legislature increased the trainee classroom renewal hours from 16 to 32 hours beginning on July 1, 2011, and 48 hours beginning on July 1, 2013. The hours must be approved classroom training covering the electrical laws, the national electrical code, or electrical theory; or equivalent classroom training taken as part of an apprenticeship or school program.

Summary of Bill:

In-class education requirements are established for journeyman and specialty electrician applicants to obtain a certificate of competency. The number of in-class hours depends on the hours of work required for the certificate:

- for certificates requiring 2,000 hours of work, 24 in-class education hours are required;
- for certificates requiring 4,000 hours of work, 48 hours of in-class education are required;
- journeymen must complete 96 hours of in-class education to obtain a certificate.

Classroom training taken to renew a trainee certificate qualifies as in-class education, and "in-class education" is defined to be the same as education required for trainee certificate renewal.

The new requirements take effect July 1, 2013.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on July 1, 2013.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The electrical industry is changing. This bill is about consumer safety. Electricity can kill. Electricians who work alone and will train new electricians need to understand how electricity works, the basic safety issues of grounding and bonding, and what to do in an emergency. Understanding technology requires a classroom setting. The bill requires only 24 hours of in-class education for each 2,000 work hours, and a wide variety of educational options are available. No additional education is required; the bill just mirrors what the Legislature was trying to do in 2010. Workers who do not have in-class education have a difficult time passing the exam. People guess and take the exam four or five times. Electricity should not be a guessing game. A diverse industry group supports this bill. In-

class education is also a way to network, which can reduce injury and is a way to find out about jobs.

Oregon and Idaho already require classroom training, and electricians from these states will not be affected. The bill does not affect people who are already journeymen. Only out-of-state electricians and trainees will be affected. The bill closes the loopholes in current law. For example, a trainee who gets 4,000 work hours in less than two years, and out-of-state applicants, are currently not required to have in-class education.

Over 4,400 citations were issued in a six month period for underground economy activity.

(Opposed) The Legislature should be thoughtful about changing requirements when the 2010 bill has not been put into place. The electrical industry is well trained. Training requirements should be set through apprenticeship programs. A person would need to work 40 hours per week for 50 weeks to not have to do in-class training under current law.

If class time was worth something, it might be good. Time sitting in a chair with no testing is not worth anything. There is no evidence that in-class education improves safety or efficiency. The pass rates also are not good for persons who went through apprenticeship programs.

The real impact of this bill is on out-of-state journeyman. This roadblock on out-of-state electricians will hurt Washington electricians because other states may also build fences. Instead, we should work on reciprocity.

This bill does not solve the problems that cause fires: misuse of extension cords, oven issues, and old wiring.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Senator Conway, prime sponsor; Nicole Grant, Certified Electrical Workers of Washington; Dave Meyers, Washington State Building and Construction Trades Council; Rod Belisle, National Electrical Contractors Association and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers; Larry Stevens, Mechanical Contractors Association of Western Washington; and Ted Jackson, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 46.

(Opposed) Kathleen Collins, Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning; Jim King, Washington Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning Association; and Gary Smith, Independent Business Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.