

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5677

As Reported By House Committee On:

Commerce & Labor

Title: An act relating to clarification of building code and structure requirements.

Brief Description: Clarifying building code and structure requirements.

Sponsors: Senators Roach, Haugen and Winsley; by request of Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Commerce & Labor: 3/29/95, 3/30/95 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Lisk, Chairman; Hargrove, Vice Chairman; Thompson, Vice Chairman; Romero, Ranking Minority Member; Conway, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Cairnes; Cody; Cole; Goldsmith and Horn.

Staff: Pam Madson (786-7166).

Background: The state building code consists of a series of uniform national codes that include the Uniform Building Code, the Uniform Fire Code, the Uniform Mechanical Code, and the Uniform Plumbing Code. The state Building Code Council reviews these national standards and adopts them and may modify them as part of the state building code. These uniform codes are updated periodically and may involve a change in nomenclature and organization. These changes, once adopted by the council, may require changes in state laws that reference them. Local building officials may request opinions from the Building Code Council that relate to the code.

The state building code also includes regulations adopted by the council to implement state law and policy that make buildings accessible to the physically handicapped or the elderly. In setting minimum standards, the council must consider minimum standards adopted in other states. Currently state law exempts apartment houses with 10 or fewer units from compliance with the barrier-free access requirements. Federal Fair Housing Act standards exempt apartment buildings with three or fewer units.

The handicapped access requirements apply to structures that are substantially remodeled or rehabilitated. A structure is substantially remodeled or rehabilitated if the cost of alteration during a twelve month period exceeds sixty percent of its current appraised value.

Standards regarding safety glazing (safety glass) were adopted in Washington prior to establishing the state building code. The building code also contains standards regulating safety glass that are maintained and updated by the state Building Code Council.

Summary of Bill: Nomenclature, references to location within the codes, and grammatical errors are corrected in statutes that reference uniform codes.

The Building Code Council may give advisory opinions that relate to the state building code to any local official that enforces the state building code.

The exemption conditions in the federal Fair Housing Act Amendments of 1988 are reflected in state law by allowing an exemption from physical disability access requirements for apartment houses on individual properties with 3 or fewer dwelling units. In setting minimum standards, the council must consider not only minimum standards adopted in other states but also those of the federal government.

For application of physical disability access requirements, a structure that is substantially remodeled or rehabilitated is one where alterations during a twelve month period exceed sixty percent of its value. The need to determine current appraised value is eliminated.

The standards for safety glass are repealed leaving standards for safety glass under jurisdiction of the state Building Code Council and the state building code.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 21, 1995.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This is primarily a housekeeping bill. The uniform codes have been updated. Certain occupancies have been recodified. This bill brings state law into conformity with these changes. It also eliminates regulations that apply to safety glass that were enacted prior to the state building code and currently conflict with standards applied through the state building code adopted by the Building Code Council. The bill adopts the changes in the national codes so they all match. Concern was expressed that national codes should be the maximum code requirements rather than the minimum. It is disconcerting to have cities and towns add more

regulations to those in the state building code. The state building code exceeds the requirements of federal law for handicapped access.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Don McDonald, Building Industry Association of Washington; and Larry Ward, State Building Code Council.