

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2068

As Reported By House Committee On:
Commerce & Labor

Title: An act relating to electrical inspection regulatory reform.

Brief Description: Allowing counties to inspect electrical installations.

Sponsors: Representatives McMorris, Grant, Sherstad and Thompson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Commerce & Labor: 3/3/97, 3/5/97 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives McMorris, Chairman; Honeyford, Vice Chairman; Boldt; Clements and Lisk.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Conway, Ranking Minority Member; Wood, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Cole and Hatfield.

Staff: Selwyn Walters (786-7117).

Background: The state electrical code establishes electrical wiring requirements for all types of residential, commercial, institutional, and industrial buildings or structures. All equipment, including industrial control panels, that uses, conducts, or is operated by electrical current must conform to the code and the rules developed by the Department of Labor and Industries to carry out the code.

The department generally inspects electrical installations statewide. However, cities and towns are authorized to enact ordinances or rules regulating electrical installations within their boundaries that are equal to, or higher than the standards established by the state electrical code. The officials of cities and towns where electrical inspections are required by ordinance enforce their particular electrical code. A city or town must require that its electrical inspectors meet the same qualifications as those required of state electrical inspectors.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Counties are authorized to enact and enforce their own electrical ordinances relating to electrical wiring and installation. The ordinances must be equal to, or higher than the standards established by the state electrical code. Counties opting to perform their own electrical inspections must give first consideration for employment to inspectors currently employed with the Department of Labor and Industries.

Exempt from the inspection requirement of the electrical installation law are persons who install load control equipment as part of a utility load management or conservation program owned by a utility and the work is performed by licensed personnel employed by a utility.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill exempts persons who install load control equipment as part of a utility load management or conservation program owned by a utility and the work is performed by licensed personnel employed by a utility.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 3, 1997.

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

Testimony For: Counties should have the same authority to conduct electrical inspections as cities. An amendment is needed to exempt a utility that installs load control equipment. This amendment is vital to the existence of the utility. The exemption allows the utility to control its own load thereby allowing an uninterrupted supply of power to customers. The safety of the public will be assured because the installations will be made by a licensed electrician.

Testimony Against: The result of this bill will be a lack of uniformity in the interpretation of the state electrical installation law and the national electrical codes in use by the state. The bill allows counties to assess very high fees for an electrical permit. Public safety is affected because the municipalities selectively enforce the code and lack the resources to perform inspections required under the electricians and electrical installation law.

Testified: (In support) Paul Parker, Association of Counties; Brian Minnich, Building Industry Association of Washington; and Tom McDonald, King County. (In support with amendments) Aaron Jones, Washington Rural Electric Cooperative Association; and Jim Cahill and Beth Funke, Orcas Power & Light. (Opposed) Owen Linch, Joint Council of Teamsters; Richard King and Mike Grunwald, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers; Harold Abbe, Association of Western Pulp and

Paper Workers; Robby Stern, Washington State Labor Council; Jack Watterson, Department of Labor and Industries; and Larry Stevens, National Electrical Contractors Association.