

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESSB 6231

As of Third Reading, February 15, 2000

Title: An act relating to telecommunications contractors and installations.

Brief Description: Regulating telecommunications contractors and installations.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Labor & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Senators Fairley and Oke; by request of Department of Labor & Industries).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Labor & Workforce Development: 1/11/2000, 1/25/2000 [DPS, DNPS].

Ways & Means: 2/1/2000, 2/2/2000 [DPS (LWD)].

Failed Senate, 2/15/2000, 19-6.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6231 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Fairley, Chair; Franklin, Vice Chair; Kline, Oke and Wojahn.

Minority Report: Do not pass substitute.

Signed by Senator Hochstatter.

Staff: Jack Brummel (786-7428)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6231 as recommended by Committee on Labor & Workforce Development be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Loveland, Chair; Bauer, Vice Chair; Brown, Vice Chair; Fairley, Fraser, Kline, Kohl-Welles, Long, Rasmussen, B. Sheldon, Snyder, Spanel, Thibaudeau, Winsley and Wojahn.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Rossi, West and Zarelli.

Staff: Brian Sims (786-7431)

Background: In 1998 the Department of Labor and Industries formed a telecommunications task force with representatives from the telecommunications industry. The task force addressed safety concerns related to potential hazards associated with the installation of fiber optic cables and telecommunication equipment. The task force members and the department believe that the state needs minimum standards and licensing requirements for

telecommunication installations. Cities in the state that currently inspect telecommunications wiring are Bellevue, Seattle, and Tacoma.

Summary of Bill: A telecommunications contractor license is required to install or maintain a telecommunications system, with limited exceptions. Permits and inspections are required for most non-residential installations. An owner of a building or a tenant who has obtained the permission of the owner may perform telecommunications installations and maintenance without a license and without the inspections, permits or fees otherwise required. A telecommunications contractor must appoint a certified telecommunications administrator to be responsible for compliance with installation codes, obtaining permits and scheduling inspections. A surety bond or a cash deposit filed with the department is also required in case the contractor fails to meet any obligations arising out of the contractor's installation or maintenance of telecommunication systems. A contractor is required to maintain insurance or file an assigned account to cover injury or damage to property or individuals.

The composition of the electrical board is changed to include telecommunications specialists. The board is authorized to settle disputes over methods of installation or maintenance of telecommunications materials and equipment. The board is also authorized to review and reverse any license or certificate suspensions or revocations, or penalties imposed by the department for violations of its telecommunications regulations.

Violations of the licensing and regulatory provisions of the bill may result in a minimum \$100 penalty and a maximum \$10,000 penalty. Noncompliance with requirements may result in the revocation or suspension of a contractor's license or administrator's certificate. Cities or towns may enact and enforce telecommunication standards that are equal to, higher than, or better than the department's and disputes with the department over such standards are subject to arbitration.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: The bill addresses concerns with dual licensing and dual administrators. Fees will be based on costs. Fire alarms, police and life safety equipment are tied into telecommunication equipment. It is important that wiring be installed by qualified people. Since the 1996 Federal Telecommunications Act, there is a need for state attention. A separate board is preferred but fair representation on the electrical board is acceptable.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Patrick Woods, L&I; Mike Hendrix, IBEW; Rosemary Williamson, GTE; Fred Tricarico, Communications Workers of America; Tom Walker, US West; Mark Triplett, WA Assn. of Cities; Larry Stevens, NECA; Cliff Webster, Assn. Builders and Contractors; Jay Boyle, CWA.