

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1952

As of March 22, 2017

Title: An act relating to enforcement of the electrical laws.

Brief Description: Concerning enforcement of the electrical laws.

Sponsors: House Committee on Labor & Workplace Standards (originally sponsored by Representatives Blake, J. Walsh, Pellicciotti, Chapman, Stambaugh and Ormsby).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/03/17, 97-0.

Committee Activity: Commerce, Labor & Sports: 3/22/17.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Permits cities that conduct electrical inspections to enforce electrical licensing and certification requirements.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, LABOR & SPORTS

Staff: Richard Rodger (786-7461)

Background: Persons who engage in the electrical business must obtain a license as an electrical contractor, and electricians must qualify for and be issued a certificate of competency. Persons engaged in the telecommunications business must be licensed as telecommunications contractors. Apprentices and other persons learning the electrical trade must obtain a training certificate, and must work under supervision of a certified electrician and under a specified ratio of trainees to certified electricians. The Department of Labor and Industries (Department) administers and enforces these licensing and certification requirements.

A person who engages in the electrical business without being licensed is subject to a \$50 to \$10,000 civil penalty. A person who violates the supervision requirements, employs a person without a certificate to perform electrical work, or who performs electrical work without a certificate is subject to a \$50 to \$500 civil penalty. The Department may also issue a penalty of \$100 to \$10,000 to a person who engages in the telecommunications business without a license.

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.

Electrical installations must comply with the national electrical code, and a permit and inspection is generally required for electrical work. Cities may adopt ordinances with an equal or higher standard than required by the state for electrical work. If a city adopts such an ordinance and enforces a standard, inspections are performed by the city rather than the Department. About 25 cities have electrical ordinances and perform inspections.

The Electrical Board (Board) advises the Director of the Department on enforcement of the electrical laws. The Board also hears appeals of license or certificate suspensions and revocations, appeals of proposed decisions on penalties made by the Office of Administrative Hearings, and appeals of other decisions. The Board is composed of:

- one representative of a generator or distributor of electric power;
- one representative of a facilities-based telecommunications service provider;
- three licensed electrical contractors;
- one licensed telecommunications contractor;
- one representative of a business that manufactures or distributes electrical and telecommunications materials, equipment, or devices;
- one public member;
- three certified electricians;
- one telecommunications worker;
- one licensed professional electrical engineer who is a registered communications distributions designer;
- one outside line worker; and
- one nonvoting member who is a building official from a city or town with an electrical inspection program.

Summary of Bill: Cities that conduct electrical inspections may enforce the electrical laws related to electrical contractor licensing, and electrician certification and trainees. The penalties are the same as penalties the state imposes. The authority of the Department to enforce these laws is retained.

The Board member who is a building official of a city or town with an electrical inspection program is made a voting member of the Board.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: There are a lot of bad electrical contractors out there that are exceeding the allowable number of trainees as their business model. One contractor in Seattle was using trainees with a ratio of 14 or 15 trainees per each electrician. That contractor was fined \$177,000 by L&I and the contractor still made a profit on the job.

CON: The cities do not have any experience or training in enforcing these laws and might have a different interpretation than the state inspectors. The City of Tacoma already has nine

different inspection jurisdictions. The bill does not contain an appeals process for the city's new inspection authority. After the House floor amendment, this bill contains two subjects and could be thrown out by the courts. The bill allows both a city and L&I to take enforcement actions; what happens when they are in conflict? The proponents want to make this a mandatory provision, requiring city enforcement of the state's laws. The bill treats electricians differently than all the other trades. When a city discovers a violation now, the city inspectors report the issue to L&I for enforcement.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Matthew Hepner, IBEW.

CON: Michael Curley, Electrical Contractor; Gary Smith, Independent Business Association; Jim King, WA St HVAC Industry Assn; Carl Schroeder, Association of Washington Cities; Tom Phillips, Washington Association of Building Officials; Angela Haupt, City of Kirkland.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.