

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESSB 5320

As Reported by House Committee On:
Labor & Workplace Standards

Title: An act relating to journey level electrician certifications of competency.

Brief Description: Concerning journey level electrician certifications of competency.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Labor & Commerce (originally sponsored by Senators Saldaña, Keiser, King, Randall and Wilson, C.).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Labor & Workplace Standards: 3/22/23, 3/24/23 [DP].

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Modifies the eligibility requirements for obtaining journey level electrician certification.
- Establishes a temporary pathway for current trainees to obtain journey level electrician certification without completing an apprenticeship program through July 1, 2026.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & WORKPLACE STANDARDS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Berry, Chair; Fosse, Vice Chair; Robertson, Ranking Minority Member; Schmidt, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bronoske, Connors, Doglio, Ormsby and Ortiz-Self.

Staff: Kelly Leonard (786-7147).

Background:

An electrical contractor license is required to engage in the business of installing or

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maintaining wires or equipment to convey electric current, or equipment to be operated by electric current. A person must have a journey level or specialty electrician certificate of competency in order to work as an electrician. To obtain a certificate of competency, a person must complete certain requirements and pass an examination. The Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) issues licenses and certificates of competency and otherwise administers the regulation of electricians and electrical work. L&I may enter a reciprocal agreement with another state to accept the credentials of the other state if the requirements are equal to Washington's standards.

In 2018 the state passed Substitute Senate Bill 6126, which modified the eligibility requirements for taking the examination for a journey level electrician certificate of competency, effective July 1, 2023.

Until July 1, 2023, there are two primary pathways for obtaining certification as a journey level electrician, either by completing a certain number of hours of work experience with classroom training, or by completing an apprenticeship program. For the first pathway, a person must work in the electrical construction trade for at least 8,000 hours under the supervision of a certified electrician, of which at least 4,000 hours must be spent working in commercial or industrial installations, and meet classroom training requirements. Experience in the electrical construction trade in the military, or up to two years of classroom work in certain school programs, may be credited towards the required hours of work experience. For the second pathway, a person must complete an apprenticeship program approved by the Washington Apprenticeship and Training Council (WATC).

Beginning July 1, 2023, these two pathways are merged, and any applicant must complete an apprenticeship program approved by the WATC or equivalent apprenticeship program approved by L&I. The program must include at least 8,000 hours of work in the electrical construction trade under the supervision of a certified electrician, of which at least 4,000 hours must be spent working in commercial or industrial installations. Experience in the electrical construction trade in the military, or up to two years of classroom work in certain school programs, may be credited towards work hours required by the apprenticeship program.

From July 1, 2023, until July 1, 2025, L&I may permit an applicant who obtained experience and training equivalent to a journey level apprenticeship program if the applicant had good cause for not completing the minimum hours of work under the new standards.

Summary of Bill:

The eligibility requirements for obtaining certification as a journey level electrician are modified. Beginning July 1, 2023, a person is eligible to take the examination for a certificate of competency through any one of the following pathways:

- completing an apprenticeship program approved by the WATC, including work

- experience and education requirements of an 8,000 hour electrical construction trade, of which 4,000 hours must be new industrial or commercial electrical installations; experience in the electrical construction trade in the military; or up to two years of classroom work in certain school programs may be credited towards work hours required by the apprenticeship program;
- completing an apprenticeship program in another jurisdiction equivalent to an apprenticeship program approved by the WATC, including work experience and education requirements of an 8,000 hour electrical construction trade, of which 4,000 hours must be new industrial or commercial electrical installations;
 - having an out-of-state journey level electrician certification obtained through examination by a state licensing jurisdiction requiring at least 8,000 hours of supervised experience in the electrical construction trade installing and maintaining electrical wiring and equipment, of which 4,000 hours must be new industrial or commercial electrical installations, provided that all experience applied toward qualifying for the examination must have been gained in the state that issued the certificate or in the military;
 - having at least 16,000 hours of out-of-state experience in the electrical construction trade installing and maintaining electrical wiring and equipment, of which 4,000 hours must be new industrial or commercial electrical installations; or
 - having 8,000 hours of experience in the electrical construction trade installing and maintaining electrical wiring and equipment while serving in a construction battalion in the military.

The temporary authority, from July 1, 2023, until July 1, 2025, for L&I to permit applicants to take the examination without completing certain requirements based on good cause is removed. Instead, until July 1, 2026, L&I must permit a person issued an electrical training certificate to gain the experience required to qualify for the examination without requiring the person to register in an apprenticeship program if the person either had 3,000 hours of lawful experience working in the electrical construction trade before July 1, 2023, or completed a two-year training school program before July 1, 2023. Under either circumstance, the person may take the examination without completing an apprenticeship program if he or she has 8,000 hours of lawful experience working in the electrical construction trade, of which 4,000 hours must be new industrial or commercial electrical installations.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on July 1, 2023.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Electrical work has become more complex and dangerous, and it is important for workers to have proper training and education. At the same time, it is important to not overly limit access to careers in the electrical trade. In an effort to improve workforce development, in 2018 the Legislature passed laws to require apprenticeships in this field. Those requirements had a delayed effective date in order to prepare industries. However, there have been bumps in the road, including a pandemic. This bill helps provide some more flexibility by extending some aspects of the implementation phase, especially for current trainees. It also restores certain pathways for certification for persons who are coming from out of state or who have military experience. This bill is important for streamlining certification procedures and improving the skills of workers in the electrical trade.

Apprenticeships are life-changing, and they produce highly skilled workers. This bill keeps the state on a path to an apprenticeship model while also addressing the concerns of stakeholders. The bill addresses stakeholder concerns by allowing a three-year window for current trainees to obtain certification without having to go through the apprenticeship process. It keeps those hard workers from falling through the cracks. Any rules adopted by L&I to effect these changes should be carefully crafted.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Rebecca Saldaña, prime sponsor; Halene Sigmund, Construction Industry Training Council of Washington; Carolyn Logue, Associated Builders and Contractors - Inland Pacific Chapter; Zach Snyder and Nicole Grant, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 46; Sophia Steele, Associated Builders and Contractors; and Christine Reid, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Union 77.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.