

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1557

As Passed House:

March 8, 2005

Title: An act relating to expanding membership of the electrical board by appointment of one outside line worker.

Brief Description: Expanding membership of the electrical board by appointment of one outside line worker.

Sponsors: By Representatives Conway, Ericks, Kessler, Campbell, Blake, Simpson, Ormsby, Morrell, Chase, P. Sullivan and Kenney.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Commerce & Labor: 2/10/05, 2/21/05 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/8/05, 66-32.

<h3>Brief Summary of Bill</h3>

- Adds one outside line worker to the Electrical Board.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Conway, Chair; Wood, Vice Chair; Hudgins and McCoy.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Condotta, Ranking Minority Member; and Sump, Assistant Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Chris Cordes (786-7103).

Background:

State law requires that persons who install or maintain wires or equipment to convey electric current be licensed. This licensure requirement does not apply to utilities and persons employed by utilities who install, repair, and maintain lines, wires, apparatus, or equipment used to light streets or public areas, or to transmit or distribute electricity to customers. The workers who construct and maintain electric transmission and distribution facilities are known as outside line workers.

The Department of Labor and Industries (Department) licenses electrical contractors and certifies electrical administrators and electricians. The Department also regulates the installation, repair, and maintenance of electrical wires, equipment, and services.

The Electrical Board (Board) advises the Director of the Department on electrical and telecommunications installation standards, inspection procedures, and adoption of rules pertaining to electrical inspections. The Board also reviews appeals of license revocations and suspensions, as well as other citations.

The 14-member Board includes 13 voting members who represent various segments of the electrical and telecommunications industries and the public. These members include one member who is an employee or officer of an entity generating or distributing electric power. The one nonvoting Board member is a city building official. These Board members are appointed by the Governor with the advice of the Director of the Department. The Secretary of the Board is the Chief Electrical Inspector.

The Board meets at least once each quarter. The Board members are compensated no more than \$50 per day for days in which they attend official meetings or perform official duties. They are also reimbursed for travel expenses. These costs are paid from the electrical license fund.

Summary of Bill:

One outside line worker is added as a voting member of the Electrical Board. The Governor must appoint this member of the Board within 90 days after the bill's effective date.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The union covers two branches of service, one "inside" the facility being served with electricity and the other "outside" with responsibility for building and servicing the electrical grid. The technology and other demands that face the electrical industry create a very exciting future, but right now, only the employer of this "outside" work is represented on the Electrical Board. The 11,000 outside line workers also should be represented on the Board. The Board sometimes proposes rules that impact the outside work by narrowing the scope of that work, for example. It would be a great benefit to all sides to have the outside line worker's point of view represented. The Board very rarely has a dispute that separates into business and labor factions. Votes are generally unanimous, or nearly so. Adding another worker will not disturb the balance on the Board. Even if the Board was faced with a tie vote, this just means that it takes more than a simple majority to approve an issue, which is a

common way that such boards function. If other entities need to be represented they also could come forward with a bill. If the Board does nothing that impacts utility work, why not remove the utility company representative?

Testimony Against: Electrical contracting work requires significant, rigorous training and understanding of the "inside" electrical industry. Workers in this field must keep up with technological and safety changes. Outside line workers are not trained in this field and the statutes that the Board administer do not apply to these workers. This bill would add a worker member to the Board who does not have these qualifications; they would have to make decisions they would know nothing about. No one would ask to add a plumber, for example, to this Board. The Board cannot protect the public if its members are not knowledgeable about the industry's issues. This is not just a matter of representation, but a matter of qualifications. There are others who would be more knowledgeable who are not represented on the Board either. For example, other unrepresented industries might include the heating, ventilation, and cooling contractors who have a real interest in the Board's functioning. The committee should consider whether the utility representative should be on the Board, although the language would seem to allow the Board member to be either an employer or a manager of the utility. It is possible that this Board member was added because utilities have a responsibility for deciding whether to connect a building with the electrical grid.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Don Guilott and Richard King, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers; Collins Sprague, Avista Corporation; and Mike Watkinson, Dependable Electric.

(Opposed) Clarion Turner, Washington State Electrical Contractors Association; Meredith Lambert, Independent Electrical Contractor Association; Larry Stevens, National Electrical Contractors Association; and Gary Smith, Independent Business Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.