SENATE BILL REPORT
SB 5265

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Labor & Commerce, February 7, 2025

Title: An act relating to expanding minimum requirements for electrical inspectors to include certain out-of-state experience.

Brief Description: Expanding minimum requirements for electrical inspectors to include certain out-of-state experience.

Sponsors: Senators King, Boehnke, Chapman, Dozier and Harris.

Brief History:
Committee Activity: Labor & Commerce: 2/03/25, 2/07/25 [DPS, DNP, w/oRec].

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Expands the minimum requirements for electrical inspectors to allow for certain out-of-state experience from states that have a reciprocity agreement with Washington.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & COMMERCE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5265 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Saldaña, Chair; Conway, Vice Chair; King, Ranking Member; Alvarado, Ramos and Stanford.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Schoesler.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Braun and MacEwen.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Staff: Jarrett Sacks (786-7448)

Background: Electrical Inspectors. With some exceptions, a person doing installation, alteration, or maintenance of any electrical system or equipment must first purchase an electrical work permit. When the work is complete, the person must request an electrical inspection within three business days after completing the work or within one business day after any part of the installation has been energized. A person may be subject to civil penalties for failing to obtain required permits or inspections.

The Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) administers the electrical requirements. Several cities issue their own permits and conduct their own inspections within their local city limits. L&I issues permits and conducts inspections throughout the state, except for within the cities that have their own inspection programs.

Electrical inspectors must meet certain minimum training and experience requirements. An electrical inspector must have:

- four years of experience as a journey level electrician in the electrical construction trade installing and maintaining electrical wiring and equipment; or
- four years experience as a journey level electrician performing the duties of an electrical inspector employed by L&I or a city or town with an approved inspection program.

Electrical Inspector Qualifications Workgroup. Last year, the Legislature passed ESB 6089, which eliminated pathways for qualifying as an electrical inspector through a combination of engineering school experience and work experience. ESB 6089 also required L&I and the Association of Washington Cities to work with cities that issue their own electrical permits to identify appropriate pathways to qualify as an electrical inspector and report to the Legislature. In its report to the Legislature, the workgroup made two recommendations:

- accept experience outside of Washington to qualify as an electrical inspector; and
- seek funding to increase the rate of pay for local electrical inspectors.

Summary of Bill (First Substitute): The minimum requirements for electrical inspectors are expanded to allow for certain out-of-state experience. To qualify as an electrical inspector, an individual may have:

- a journey level electrician certificate issued by L&I; and
- eight years of experience in the electrical construction trade installing and maintaining electrical wiring and equipment, four years of which occurred after obtaining a journey level electrician license from another state electrical licensing authority that has a reciprocal licensing agreement with L&I for journey level electricians.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY LABOR & COMMERCE COMMITTEE (First Substitute):

Limits who may qualify as an electrical inspector using out-of-state experience to journey level electricians licensed in a state with a reciprocal licensing agreement with Washington.

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 on Original Bill: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: The bill comes out of a recommendation from a report done by L&I. The bill would allow the continuation of projects that need inspections. The bill expands the candidate pool for inspectors. Growth in construction has made it difficult to recruit inspectors.

CON: Budget is more of a barrier to hiring inspectors than anything else. The bill reduces qualification for inspectors with no benefit to workers. There are many electricians that are qualified to be inspectors that are currently unemployed. Washington maintains high training and safety standards, there is no assurance that the out-of-state electricians are held to same standard.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Curtis King, Prime Sponsor; Shree Thirunagari, City of Vancouver; John Kendall, City of Vancouver.

CON: Matthew Hepner, IBEW/ceww; Clint Byson, ibew 76; Lisa fosberg, ibew 76.

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