

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5725

**AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES,
MARCH 5, 1991**

Brief Description: Exempting electrical utilities and contractors from licensing requirements for certain work involving electrical transmission lines.

SPONSORS: Senators Gaspard, Matson, Sutherland, Johnson, Moore, Murray and McCaslin.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5725 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Thorsness, Chairman; Saling, Vice Chairman; Nelson, Patterson, Roach, Stratton, and Williams.

Staff: Dave Monthie (786-7198)

Hearing Dates: February 28, 1991; March 5, 1991

BACKGROUND:

The Department of Labor and Industries licenses electrical contractors and certifies journeyman electricians. Only licensed electrical contractors may engage in the business of installing or maintaining wires or equipment to convey electric current, or to install or maintain equipment to be operated by electric current as it pertains to the electrical industry. Only certified journeyman electricians may engage in the electrical construction trade. The department may assess civil penalties against any person or entity violating these provisions.

No license is required from any utility for work in installing or maintaining lines or wires from the source of electrical supply to the point of contact at the premises or property of the customer, or for installing, maintaining, or repairing service connections or meters on the premises of the customer. The provisions of law requiring certified journeyman electricians, and prescribing civil penalties for violations, do not apply to any electrical utility or its employees, in the installation and maintenance of wiring, circuits, and equipment by or for the utility, or as part of its own property or systems.

Questions have arisen as to the ability of electrical utilities and electrical contractors to lawfully install or maintain wires or equipment beyond the initial point of contact between the supply line and the premises of the customer.

SUMMARY:

No electrical license is required under Chapter 19.28 RCW from any electrical utility or contractor principally engaged in the erection and maintenance of primary power lines because of work in connection with the installation and/or maintenance of such lines. Exemptions granted shall apply to employees when engaged in the performance of duties for an electrical utility or contractor for which no license is required.

EFFECT OF PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE:

Language is added to make clear that employees of only electrical contractors principally engaged in the erection and maintenance of primary power lines are exempted from the licensing requirements.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: none requested

TESTIMONY FOR:

Clarification is necessary as to what type of electrical work exterior to buildings may be done by utilities without a license. Utilities have for years been doing some of this work, but the Department of Labor and Industries recently levied fines against a utility for doing such work.

TESTIMONY AGAINST:

It is not good public policy to allow unlicensed persons to do work that contractors must have a license to do. Certain terms in the bill, such as "primary power lines," should be defined.

TESTIFIED: Joe Brewer, Department of Labor and Industries; Lon Willits, IBEW Local No. 43 (pro); Collins Sprague, Washington Water Power (pro); Larry Stevens, National Electric Contractors Association (con)