

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6208

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES, FEBRUARY 6, 1992

Brief Description: Allowing private electrical contractors to install a PUD electrical service.

SPONSORS: Senators Erwin, Stratton and Saling

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6208 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

Minority Report: Do not pass and do not substitute.

Signed by Senators Jesernig and Sutherland.

Staff: Phil Moeller (786-7445)

Hearing Dates: January 28, 1992; February 4, 1992; February 6, 1992

BACKGROUND:

In 1983, the Legislature required electrical utilities owned by first class cities to allow customers more options when service is installed. Legislation was enacted requiring these utilities to give customers the opportunity to chose an electrical contractor to install material or equipment in lieu of having city utility personnel perform the installation. This requirement applied only if the utility had a policy of directly assessing its customers a service installation charge.

Public Utility Districts that provide electrical service are similar to utilities owned by cities in that the customers are regarded as the system owners, as opposed to utilities that are owned by private investors. There is no requirement that Public Utility Districts provide to their customers service installation options similar to the requirement of first class city utilities.

SUMMARY:

If a Public Utility District (PUD) offers electrical service and directly assesses its customers a service installation charge, customers may contract with a qualified electrical contractor to install services. Written approval of the PUD is required. If the customer request is denied, the PUD must provide a written explanation, and a PUD preference to use its employees is not sufficient to deny the request.

Any private contractor is solely responsible for any damages resulting from the installation of services.

EFFECT OF PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE:

The provisions requiring either a written approval or a written explanation of denial by the PUD are stricken from the bill.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: none requested

TESTIMONY FOR:

Customers of a PUD deserve the opportunity to choose who they employ to perform this type of work. The ability to choose will lead to more competition and subsequent savings to the ratepayers.

TESTIMONY AGAINST:

PUDs should be allowed to choose whether or not to have these policies at the local level since service quality is at stake. Major problems could occur if the contractors are not competent.

TESTIFIED: Senator Erwin, prime sponsor; Phyllis McGavick, Steve Grey, Snohomish PUD (con); Larry Stevens, NECA (pro); Dave Arbaugh, Pat McGary, Washington PUD Assn. (con); Peggy Boe, NECA (pro); Mark Wornath, IBA (pro)