

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1633

As Reported By House Committee On:
Energy & Utilities

Title: An act relating to electrical installations.

Brief Description: Allowing counties to inspect electrical installations.

Sponsors: Representatives Grant, Heavey, Chandler, Roland, H. Myers and Morris.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Energy & Utilities, March 2, 1993, DP.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members:
Representatives Grant, Chair; Finkbeiner, Vice Chair;
Miller, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Johanson;
Kessler; Kremen; and Long.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 2
members: Representatives Casada, Ranking Minority Member;
and Ludwig.

Staff: Ken Conte (786-7113).

Background: The Department of Labor and Industries is responsible for establishing standards and inspecting, statewide, all electrical wires and equipment and the installation of such wires and equipment. State law establishes education and experience standards required of all electrical inspectors employed by the department.

Currently, cities and towns may elect to conduct their own electrical inspections, if the city or town requires standards for equipment and installations that are equal to or higher than those of the department. Inspectors employed by cities and towns to conduct their own inspections, must meet the same education and experience standards as those employed by the state. There are currently about 15 cities or towns throughout the state which conduct their own inspections.

Any disputes which may arise regarding whether or not a city or town is requiring standards of electrical equipment, and installations that are equal to or higher than the state standard's, are to be settled by arbitration. Arbitration decisions may be appealed to the superior court.

Counties do not have the authority to adopt standards or conduct electrical inspections.

Summary of Bill: Counties are granted the same option as cities and towns to inspect electrical equipment and installations, if the county requires standards for equipment and installations that are equal to or higher than those of the department.

As with cities and towns, inspectors employed to conduct electrical inspections must meet the same qualifications as state inspectors. Similarly, disputes arising over county standards are to be settled by arbitration.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: It is not mandatory that counties do inspections. We're only asking for the option; that's not asking a lot. This is consistent with the growth management act which encourages regulation at the local level. Clark County has Tuesday and Friday inspections when the Department of Labor and Industries can get there. Yes, counties will charge more but builders will get predictability and accountability in return.

Testimony Against: The Department of Labor and Industries is opposed to this bill. Counties with a high level of activity will elect to do their own inspections. The state will be left with the rural areas which are not cost effective and this will drive up the cost of inspections. Inspections cost about \$35 now; no one can offer a more cost effective inspection. If this passes, each jurisdiction will have different standards and interpretations; there will be no uniformity around the state. The building industry needs uniform inspections and fees. This is a revenue enhancer for counties.

Witnesses: Mel Conner, citizen (opposed); Joe Brewer, Department of Labor and Industries (opposed); Larry Stevens, Edward Barnes, and Steve Washburn, National Electrical Contractors Association (opposed); Jordy Andrew, citizen (opposed); Tony Meinhardt, Independent Business Association (opposed); Ron Newbry, Pacific Power and Light (opposed);

Brian Minnich, Independent Building Association of Washington (supported); and Bill Huyette, citizen (supported).