

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 2633

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to registration of structural engineers.

Brief Description: Registering structural engineers.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Commerce & Labor (originally sponsored by Representatives B. Chandler, O'Brien, McMorris, Wood, Conway, Clements and Hurst).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Commerce & Labor: 1/26/00, 2/2/00 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/8/00, 97-0.

Passed Senate: 3/2/00, 41-0.

Passed Legislature.

<p>Brief Summary of Substitute Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Modifies the registration requirements for structural engineers.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Clements, Republican Co-Chair; Conway, Democratic Co-Chair; B. Chandler, Republican Vice Chair; Wood, Democratic Vice Chair; Hurst; Lisk; McIntire and McMorris.

Staff: Pam Madson (786-7166).

Background:

Structural engineering is the branch of engineering involved with the design, analysis, and construction of buildings and structures. Structural engineers are licensed by the Board of Registration for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors.

Prior to 1997, applicants for a structural engineering license were first required to meet the requirements for a general engineering license, which was eight years engineering experience and successful completion of two exams. Up to five years of education in engineering could be substituted for years of experience. In addition, applicants had to have two years structural engineering experience and pass an additional exam on structural engineering.

In 1997, after a rules review process by the board, these rules were determined to be beyond the authority given by statute, and the rules for structural engineers were changed. The new rules require applicants to have eight years of progressive responsibility in structural engineering experience, or equivalent education. Applicants may substitute one year of engineering education for each year of experience, up to four years. A fifth year may be substituted with structural engineering postgraduate work. Applicants must also pass two exams given at least six months apart. One exam is specific to structural engineering.

Summary of Bill:

The requirements for registering as a structural engineer are changed. The pre-1997 standards are adopted. Structural engineering is recognized as a specialized branch of professional engineering. To become licensed as a structural engineer, an applicant must have eight years of general engineering experience plus two years of structural engineering experience and hold a license as a professional engineer. Course work can substitute for up to five years of experience, but not for the two years of structural engineering experience.

Applicants must also pass a specific structural engineering exam in addition to the two exams given for the general engineering license.

An applicant for a structural engineering license who receives approval of his or her application prior to July 1, 2001, need not meet the requirement of the additional two years of structural engineering experience if they complete the structural engineering exam prior to January 30, 2002.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: (Original bill) This bill seeks to restore the standard and requirements for becoming a licensed structural engineer that existed prior to 1998,

requirements that have been in place for the last 30 years. During a rules review process by the board of registration in 1997, the rules establishing requirements for licensing as a structural engineer were revised. The change eliminated the requirement for two years of experience in structural engineering and for a professional engineering license as a prerequisite to a structural engineering license. This change diminishes the standard from a long standing practice that negatively affects public safety. Prior to 1998, structural engineering was considered a specialized branch of engineering requiring more years of experience in structural engineering and a license as a professional engineer. Additional experience has an impact on design philosophy and judgement that can improve public safety. Reciprocity of licensees is affected if Washington's requirements are below those in other states. Structural engineering is recognized as a specialized branch of engineering in 31 other states that also have the additional experience and licensing requirements. Many of these states are states with high seismic risk. Prior to 1998, a Washington engineer could obtain a license in all other states through reciprocity provisions. Now, many neighboring states have the higher standard that Washington no longer has. Changing the standard will allow Washington engineers to do work on projects in other states.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Nancee Wildermuth, Architects and Engineers Legislative Council; Robert Bourdages, Chuck Ruth, Don Northey, Edwin Huston, Structural Engineers Association of Washington; J. Mark D'amato; and Greg Schrader.