

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SSB 5984

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Commerce & Labor

**Title:** An act relating to performing engineering services on significant structures.

**Brief Description:** Allowing only structural engineers to provide engineering services for significant structures.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research & Development (originally sponsored by Senators Murray and Clements).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Commerce & Labor: 3/27/07, 3/30/07 [DP].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Requires an engineer to be registered as a structural engineer to provide structural engineering services for significant structures.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Conway, Chair; Wood, Vice Chair; Condotta, Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Green, Moeller and Williams.

**Staff:** Joan Elgee (786-7106).

**Background:**

A professional engineer is a person who, through professional education and practical experience, possesses special knowledge of the mathematical and physical sciences and the principles and methods of engineering analysis and design. A professional engineer must register with the Board of Registration for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors (Board) by meeting work experience requirements and passing an exam.

Structural engineering is a specialized branch of professional engineering. To receive a certificate of registration in structural engineering, an applicant must meet the registration

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requirements of professional engineers, have two years of structural engineering experience, and pass an exam.

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**Summary of Bill:**

An engineer must be registered as a structural engineer to provide structural engineering services for significant structures.

Significant structures are defined as:

- hazardous facilities that contain explosive substances that will endanger the public if released;
- essential facilities such as hospitals, fire and police stations, structures that hold water or fire suppression materials, emergency vehicle shelters and garages, standby power-generating equipment, government communications centers, aviation control towers, and buildings having critical national defense functions;
- structures exceeding 100 feet in height;
- buildings of five stories or more;
- bridges with a span of more than 200 feet;
- piers with a surface area of more than 10,000 square feet; and
- buildings where more than 300 people congregate in one area.

The Board may waive the structural engineer requirement until December 31, 2010, if the engineer was registered as a professional engineer as of January 1, 2007, and within two years of January 1, 2007, the engineer demonstrates to the Board that the engineer has sufficient experience in the duties typically provided by a structural engineer regarding significant structures.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on March 30, 2007.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect on July 1, 2008.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) We are trying to marry up the structural engineering speciality with the category of significant structures. This bill makes sure structural engineers address speciality structures and establishes uniform practice throughout the state. This is a life safety issue. Now, we have a patchwork across the state. The state has abdicated to local building officials what structures need a structural engineer. Licensed civil engineers can continue to work on structures up to four stories high under this bill. Fourteen states have similar laws.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Robert Bourdages, Structural Engineer's Association of Washington; Edwin Huston, Smith & Huston, Inc.; and Cliff Webster, Architects and Engineers Legislative Council.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.