

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2546

As Reported by House Committee On:
Commerce & Labor

Title: An act relating to classroom training for electrical trainees.

Brief Description: Concerning classroom training for electrical trainees.

Sponsors: Representatives Van De Wege, Conway, Morrell, Angel, Dunshee and Santos.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Commerce & Labor: 1/22/10, 1/29/10 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Increases the number of classroom hours required to renew an electrical trainee certificate from 16 to 32 beginning on July 1, 2011, and from 32 to 48 beginning on July 1, 2013.
- Changes the requirement for "classroom electrical continuing education courses" to a requirement for "classroom training."

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Conway, Chair; Wood, Vice Chair; Green, Moeller and Williams.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Condotta, Ranking Minority Member; Chandler and Crouse.

Staff: Becca Kenna-Schenk (786-7291) and Jill Reinmuth (786-7134).

Background:

The Department of Labor and Industries (Department) administers electrician certification laws. In order to work in the electrical construction trade, a person must hold a journeyman electrician certificate, a specialty electrician certificate, or an electrical training certificate

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

issued by the Department. Certified electrical trainees working in the trade must be supervised by a certified journeyman or specialty electrician. There are no requirements for obtaining an initial electrical training certificate, other than applying for certification with the Department. Trainees must renew the certificate biennially.

To renew an electrical training certificate, a person must provide the Department with:

- a list of the trainee's employers in the electrical construction industry for the previous biennial period and the number of hours worked for each employer; and
- proof of 16 hours of approved classroom electrical continuing education courses covering national and state electrical codes or electrical theory, or equivalent courses taken as part of an approved apprenticeship or electrical training program.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The requirements for renewing electrical training certificates are modified. The number of classroom hours required to renew an electrical training certificate is increased from 16 to 32 beginning on July 1, 2011, and from 32 to 48 beginning on July 1, 2013.

The requirement for "approved classroom electrical continuing education courses" is replaced with a requirement for "approved classroom training."

Upon request, the Department must provide information to legislative committees on the implementation of the new trainee education standards by December 1, 2012.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The increase in the number of classroom hours required to renew an electrical training certificate is phased-in. A provision specifying that, upon request, the Department provide information to legislative committees on the implementation of the new trainee education standards by December 1, 2012, is added.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect July 1, 2011.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill is about increasing safety among electrical workers and consumers by increasing the number of hours of training they are required to receive. Current law only requires eight hours of training per year to renew an electrical trainee certificate. This is not enough to master electrical theory or the legal requirements needed for electrical installation.

The electrical industry is a vast and growing field that is also dangerous. There are two pathways to becoming a licensed electrician in the state: as an apprentice or as an electrical trainee. Apprentices are required to complete over 200 hours of classroom training per year, while trainees are only required to take eight. The differences between test scores of apprentices compared to trainees make the inadequacy of the current system apparent. Trainees fail the test the first time they take it at a rate of 62 percent, whereas apprentices pass the test at a rate of 68 percent on their first attempt. Other trades in the state that are far less dangerous than the electrical trade require more training hours for licensure or certification. Electrical training classes are inexpensive, ranging from about \$25 to \$50 per class. In order to have a skilled workforce in the electrical industry, education is necessary. The Department should only accept classes that are approved by the state, not classes offered by independent electrical contractors. Other states like Idaho and Oregon require more training hours in the electrical industry than Washington.

(Available for questions) Apprentices and trainees take different paths to be able to take the electrical certification exam. Many people take the exam five to six times before they ultimately pass. Thousands of continuing education classes are available.

(With concerns) It is often difficult for people living in rural areas to access training classes. There is no maximum limit to the number of training hours an individual can take. Ultimately, trainees and apprentices must pass an exam in order to work in the industry. If someone does not take enough training classes, they simply will not pass the exam.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Van De Wege, prime sponsor; Nicole Grant, Certified Electrical Workers of Washington; Darrell Chapman and Richard King, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers; Terry Hatch, Electrical Industry Group; and Dave Perrin, Construction Industry Training Council.

(Available for questions) Ron Fuller, Department of Labor and Industries.

(With concerns) Gary Smith, Independent Business Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.