

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1231

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Business & Financial Services

**Title:** An act relating to establishing continuing education requirements for engineers.

**Brief Description:** Establishing continuing education requirements for engineers.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Stanford, Kirby, Manweller, Ross, Nealey, Ryu, Warnick, Hudgins and Van De Wege.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Business & Financial Services: 1/23/13, 2/13/13 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Requires certain professional engineers to complete at least 15 hours of continuing professional development per year.
- Permits engineers to satisfy the continuing professional development requirement with volunteer work or student outreach activities related to science, technology, engineering, or math.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS & FINANCIAL SERVICES

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Kirby, Chair; Ryu, Vice Chair; Blake, Habib, Hudgins, Hurst, Santos and Stanford.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Parker, Ranking Minority Member; Vick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Hawkins, Kochmar, MacEwen and O'Ban.

**Staff:** Alexa Silver (786-7190).

**Background:**

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*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.*

Engineers must be registered in order to practice engineering in Washington. The State Board of Registration for Engineers and Land Surveyors (Board), through the Department of Licensing (Department), regulates the practice of engineering as well as land surveying. Candidates for registration as an engineer must have eight years of appropriate work experience and have successfully passed the required examinations. Applicants may substitute undergraduate study in an approved engineering school or college for up to four years of the work experience requirements. The Board may also approve up to one year of appropriate postgraduate study.

The National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying (NCEES) is an organization composed of the professional regulatory boards of all states.

Since 2007 land surveyors renewing their registration certificates have been required to verify that they have completed 15 continuing professional development hours per year. The Board was required to adopt rules governing continuing professional development for land surveyors that are generally patterned after the model rules of the NCEES. Land surveyors who affirm they are not engaged in the practice of land surveying are eligible for inactive license status, which exempts them from the continuing professional development requirements.

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#### **Summary of Substitute Bill:**

Like land surveyors, engineers are required to complete 15 hours of continuing professional development per year. This does not apply to an engineer who affirms that he or she is not engaged in the practice of engineering. Engineers employed by an electric utility or gas company are permitted, not required, to report their hours of continuing professional development. If they do, the Department must maintain a record of the recorded hours.

An engineer may satisfy the continuing professional development requirement with volunteer work or outreach activities involving students, so long as the volunteer work or outreach activities relate to science, technology, engineering, or math. Each hour of volunteer work or outreach activities is equivalent to one hour of continuing professional development.

The Board must adopt rules governing continuing professional development for engineers that are generally patterned after the model rules of the NCEES.

#### **Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The substitute bill exempts engineers who are not engaged in the practice of engineering and engineers employed by an electric utility or gas company. It permits volunteer work and outreach activities to qualify as continuing professional development.

The substitute bill removes permission for the Department to set fees to cover the costs of administering the continuing professional development requirement. It also changes the effective date from July 1, 2014, to November 1, 2014.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date of Substitute Bill:** The bill takes effect on November 1, 2014.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Engineers design and oversee construction of all infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and buildings. They make sure the public is safe and that buildings and bridges do not collapse on top of us or sink under us. Washington is home to one of the most famous and most studied engineering failures.

The standards for obtaining a license are rigorous, but renewal only requires payment of a fee. Continuing professional development programs ensure engineers are current on construction techniques and changes in codes and standards. Most engineers engage in professional development, but others need an extra push so that they live up to these standards. Attorneys, health care professionals, and other design professionals are all mandated to take continuing education. The requirements in the bill are flexible; in addition to seminars, engineers can do self-directed study or attend employer-organized lunchtime seminars. It is important for continuing education to be consistent with other states.

(Opposed) There is no demonstrated need for this bill. Engineers who were surveyed in 2010 were mostly opposed to this bill. More than 20,000 engineers would be affected, whereas the continuing education for land surveyors only affected 1,000 people. Some professional engineers want to maintain their registration as a professional engineer but do not practice in the field. Engineers already get regular updates on industry standards, especially code updates. Engineers employed by private utility companies stay current with new technologies. The amount of training needed varies from year to year. The training to become an engineer is rigorous. Subpar engineers are dealt with through complaints and investigations. Professional associations may start offering training, which may be expensive. Engineers who consider coming into the industry may choose not to pursue registration as a professional engineer because of long-term costs. The bill poses an administrative cost for little or no benefit, because the requirements could be met through noneducational courses, department meetings, membership in professional societies, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) classes.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Representative Stanford, prime sponsor; Larry Costich, American Society of Civil Engineers; and Cliff Webster, Architects and Engineer Legislative Council.

(Opposed) Kim Clauson, Puget Sound Energy; Larry Stevens, Mechanical and Electrical Contractors Association; and Kathleen Collins, Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors.

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