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**Labor & Workforce Development  
Committee**

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**HB 2275**

**Brief Description:** Concerning whistleblowers in the electrical industry.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Van De Wege, Sells, Fitzgibbon, Dunshee, Farrell, Pollet, Reykdal, Ryu, Morrell, Habib, Bergquist and Ormsby.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Provides that electrical whistleblowers have the protections, procedures, and remedies under the Washington Law Against Discrimination.

**Hearing Date:** 1/23/14

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

**Background:**

The Department of Labor and Industries (Department) issues licenses to electrical contractors and certificates of competency to electricians and otherwise administers the regulation of electricians and electrical work. Permits and inspections are required for certain electrical work. Cities may conduct the inspections if they have equal or higher standards than the state.

Protection for whistleblowers is available in certain circumstances. For example, it is an unfair practice under the Washington Law Against Discrimination (WLAD) for an employer to discriminate against a person because he or she filed a charge under the WLAD. The Human Rights Commission investigates complaints and may order remedies, which include reinstatement and back pay. Whistleblowers employed by an elevator contractor have the remedies provided under the WLAD.

**Summary of Bill:**

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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.*

A whistleblower in the electrical industry who is subject to workplace reprisal or retaliatory action as a result of being a whistleblower has a right to the protections, procedures, and remedies provided under the WLAD.

A whistleblower is an employee who, in good faith, reports or opposes practices that may violate the electrical laws or rules or the employer's policies on safety, installation, repair, or maintenance. An employee who is believed to have reported such practices or who assists in the reporting of practices, or provides testimony or information in connection with the reporting of practices, is also a whistleblower. Workplace reprisal or retaliatory action includes discharge or discrimination: (1) against an employee who reported or filed any complaint, or (2) against employee who instituted any proceeding under or related to the electrical laws, or has testified or is about to testify in a proceeding; or (3) because the employee has exercised on behalf of himself or herself or others any right or responsibility under the electrical laws.

The identity of a whistleblower who in good faith reports practices that may violate the electrical laws or rules to the Department or city that regulates electrical installation, must remain confidential. A whistleblower who communicates to an appropriate governmental agency in good faith is immune from civil liability based upon the communication to the agency.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.