

SENATE BILL REPORT

EHB 1590

As of February 26, 2016

Title: An act relating to requiring completion of an apprenticeship program to receive a journey level or residential specialty electrician certificate of competency.

Brief Description: Requiring completion of an apprenticeship program to receive a journey level or residential specialty electrician certificate of competency.

Sponsors: Representatives Reykdal, Haler, Dunshee, Ryu, Van De Wege, Ormsby, Fitzgibbon, Riccelli, Blake, Tarleton, McBride, Wylie and Goodman.

Brief History: Passed House: 3/05/15, 52-46; 2/16/16, 51-47.

Committee Activity: Commerce & Labor: 3/25/15; 2/26/16.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Staff: Richard Rodger (786-7461)

Background: An electrical contractor licensee is required to engage in the business of installing or maintaining wires or equipment to convey electric current, or equipment to be operated by electric current. To work as an electrician, an individual must have a journey level (01) or specialty electrician certificate of competency. The specialties include residential (02), and multiple other specialties.

To be certified as a journey level electrician, an individual must work in the electrical construction trade for at least 8000 hours to take the required examination. For the residential specialty (02) certificate, the applicant must work in the specialty for at least 4000 hours to take the examination.

An applicant for a journey level or any of the electrical specialty certificates may alternatively complete an apprenticeship program approved by the Washington State Apprenticeship and Training Council.

An applicant who has completed a two-year program at a community or technical college or technical or trade school may substitute up to two years of the school program for two years of work experience. Training in the electrical construction trade in the military may also be credited as work experience.

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.

To obtain the necessary work experience to become a journey level or specialty electrician, persons must obtain an electrical training certificate, and in general, trainees must work under the supervision of a journey level or the appropriate specialty electrician.

The Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) issues licenses and certificates of competency and otherwise administers the regulation of electricians and electrical work.

Summary of Bill: Beginning July 1, 2021, applicants for a journey level (01) or residential specialty (02) electrician certificate of competency must complete an apprenticeship program to take the examination. The applicant must have worked under supervision for a minimum of 8000 hours for the journey level certificate or 4000 hours for the residential specialty certificate. An applicant may apply 4,000 hours of work experience, earned towards a specialty certificate, as credit towards the 8,000 hours needed for a journey level certificate.

Applicants may substitute a school program or military experience for the work experience required under an apprenticeship program. Trainees must be either in an apprenticeship program, learning a specialty other than residential, or learning the trade in a school program. Journey level and residential specialty trainees must have in their possession proof of apprenticeship or training program registration and must show these documents to a representative of L&I upon request.

Before January 1, 2019, an individual employed by a school district may apply one hour for every two hours worked in the electrical trade toward taking the examination for the following specialty electrician certificates of competency: limited energy, HVAC/refrigeration systems, and nonresidential maintenance.

Until July 1, 2023, L&I may permit an applicant who obtained experience and training equivalent to an apprenticeship program to take the journey level or residential specialty examination, as appropriate, if the applicant demonstrates good cause for not completing the required minimum hours of work before the new apprenticeship requirements take effect.

Obsolete language in several statutes is deleted and obsolete terminology is updated.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Sections 1-4 take effect on July 1, 2021; Section 6 takes effect ninety days after adjournment.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Neighboring states require the apprenticeship programs and our lack of a requirement interferes with our ability to have reciprocity with those states. These programs provide a measure of safety and quality that is superior to our current system. We ensure that employees of school districts and former members of the military get credit for their work experience towards the required hours. Veterans are required to use an accredited apprenticeship program to receive their benefits. Many vets get

lured into the construction trade as trainees only to be denied their G.I. benefits, as well as denied their training hours by L&I. We have a shortage of highly trained electricians and this bill will help our state stay competitive. The apprenticeship-only model is the best and safest way to train electricians. Unlike the college and university model these programs are not subsidized by the state. This bill will allow use to create a trans-state workforce. School district employees perform electrical maintenance on HVAC, refrigeration, and building automation systems. Our employees have been denied credit because we do not need or require fulltime supervision and a vast majority of our projects do not require permits.

CON: This bill will eliminate the ability to operate existing, L&I approved, training schools for electrical construction students seeking their journey level certificate. Over the past three years, our school has had a 100% placement rate for our students. This bill cannot be fixed. It is not about public safety and improving training. It is about reducing consumer choice and eliminating competition. We should be expanding opportunities, not limiting them. There are two ways to become an electrician in Washington, through an apprenticeship program which is used by 9% of the electricians, or a company sponsored program that is used by 91%. This bill will create a shortage of electricians in rural areas. There are fixes this bill: add a null & void clause if it doesn't result in reciprocity with our neighboring states; don't force existing trainees off a cliff and allow them to have a notation on their certificate; and allowing people who are turned down by an apprenticeship program to use a company program.

OTHER: This bill does not affect the HVAC industry and contains provisions that address our concerns. This bill does not establish reciprocity, but does address conditions that make it more feasible. School district employees would still have to be under an issued permit before the hours could be credited. The credit for HVAC worker hours will required L&I to modify their rules.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Reykdal, prime sponsor; Mike McBee, IUOE Local 609; Matthew Hepner, certified electrical workers of washington; halene sigmund, CITC/President; dennis williamson, LU112-NECA Electrical JATC; Larry Stevens, NECA, MCAWW Electrical and Mechanical Contractors.

CON: Patrick Connor, NFIB/Washington; Christine Cote, Perry Technical Institute; gary smith, independent business association.

OTHER: James King, WA St HVAC/R Assn; Tammy Fellin, Department of Labor & Industries.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.