

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5049

As of January 30, 2015

Title: An act relating to surgical technologists.

Brief Description: Concerning the registration and professional education of surgical technologists.

Sponsors: Senators Angel, Benton, Warnick, Keiser, Roach, Kohl-Welles, Schoesler, Dammeier and Hatfield.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health Care: 1/29/15.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

Staff: Evan Klein (786-7483)

Background: Surgical Technologists. A surgical technologist is a person who is supervised in a surgical setting under the delegation of a licensed physician, a registered nurse, an advanced registered nurse practitioner, an osteopathic physician, an osteopathic physician assistant, a podiatric physician, a licensed dentist, a physician assistant, or a naturopath. Surgical technologists typically perform tasks such as preparing basic sterile packs and trays; assisting with the physical preparation of the operating room; creating the sterile field; maintaining sterile technique during operative procedures; identifying and selecting appropriate packs, trays, and accessory or specialty equipment for each surgery; and preparing specimens for submission for pathological analysis. Surgical technologists may not dispense medications or perform activities that constitute the practice of medicine under the Medical Practice Act.

Surgical technologists must register with the Department of Health and do not have any specific statutory scope of practice or educational requirements.

Ambulatory Surgical Facility. Ambulatory surgical facilities are any distinct entities with the primary purpose of providing outpatient surgical services in which patients are discharged within 24 hours and do not require inpatient hospitalization.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

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.

Summary of Bill (Proposed Substitute): The professional education of surgical technologists is in the interest of the public health, safety, and welfare.

Registered surgical technologists must:

- successfully complete a nationally and programmatically accredited surgical technology program;
- successfully complete a surgical technology program offered by the United States armed forces; or
- have practiced as a surgical technologist for a period of one year within the five years immediately preceding January 1, 2016.

A person may practice as a registered surgical technologist without meeting any education requirements if the health care facility they are working at is unable to employ a sufficient number of persons who meet the requirements.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on January 1, 2016.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Currently, surgical technologists (STs) can work without any educational training. The bill is about patient safety and a need to have qualified STs in the operating room. Educated STs would ensure safer and faster surgeries, and would help reduce infections which could lead to cost reductions for patients. This bill would also let the public know that everyone in an operating room is educated. Seven community colleges in Washington already graduate STs. The waiver and grandfather clause in the bill should also address any concerns about ST shortages. The bill does not change the scope of practice for STs.

CON: Physicians are already required to directly supervise STs in an operating room at all times. This is a certification bill by another name. The education requirement crosses from STs being registered to having to be certified, which goes against the findings in the 2012 sunrise review of the ST profession.

OTHER: This bill will limit the number of STs that can practice in Washington. The 2012 sunrise review of the ST profession did not find any evidence that there needed to be a change in ST training requirements.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Angel, prime sponsor; Sandra Manwiller, Janice Olmsted, Chester Baldwin, Assn. of Surgical Technologists; Libby McRae, Yakima Valley Community College.

CON: Melanie Burton, Assn. of Perioperative Nurses; Susie Tracy, WA Academy of Eye Physicians and Surgeons, WA Ambulatory Surgery Center Assn., WA State Medical Assn.; Lisa Thatcher, WA State Hospital Assn.

OTHER: Martin Mueller, WA Dept. of Health.