

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5846

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Commerce & Labor, February 18, 2015

Title: An act relating to the granting of exemptions to the plumbing and electrical codes.

Brief Description: Granting exemptions to the plumbing and electrical codes.

Sponsors: Senators Warnick, Braun and Ericksen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Commerce & Labor: 2/18/15 [DPS, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5846 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Baumgartner, Chair; Braun, Vice Chair; King and Warnick.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Hasegawa, Ranking Minority Member; Conway and Keiser.

Staff: Susan Jones (786-7404)

Background: Regulation of Electricians and Plumbers. The plumbing and electrical trade laws are administered and enforced by the Department of Labor and Industries (L&I). L&I issues licenses to contractors seeking to engage in the business of doing electrical work, and issues certificates to individual electricians to perform electrical work. Contractors and electricians can apply for a license or certificate as either a general electrical contractor/electrician or as a specialty contractor/electrician. A plumbing contractor must register as a contractor under laws applicable to construction generally, and a plumber must be certified as either a journey-level or specialty plumber.

Permits and Exceptions. Electrical installations must meet certain standards and variances are permitted from the installation requirements on a case-by-case basis. A permit and inspection is generally required for electrical work; however, no permit is required for class A basic electrical work in most circumstances. Class A basic electrical work includes the like-in-kind replacement of timers, thermostats, dimmers, household appliances, and other replacements. Some plumbing work is exempt from the requirement that a certified

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.

electrician or plumber perform the work. Also, a person may perform electrical or plumbing work on the person's property, with some exceptions, without being certified.

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

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): The director of L&I must by rule exempt from the requirements of the electricians, electrical installations, and plumbers laws and regulations the minor or incidental electrical and plumbing work that does not require certification in order to protect public health or safety. When making an exemption, the director may, in addition to public health or safety, consider the following:

- consumer health or safety;
- employee health or safety;
- changes in technology;
- practicality and consistency with best practices; and
- enforceability.

Minor or incidental work includes but is not limited to work for which the local governments do not generally require a permit, work for which the manufacturer routinely includes with the appliance instructions for homeowner installation, or the simple disconnection and reconnection of an appliance or fixture in order to move the appliance or fixture to accomplish other work.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The bill simplifies simple jobs. The plumbing and electrical laws are complicated. This allows L&I by rule to exempt certain minor and incidental work. Appliance companies can deliver the appliance but cannot legally hook it up. It is an inconvenience and an additional cost to the consumer to have an additional person come in to do the work.

CON: These are not simple jobs. These jobs are required to be done by certified people. Electricity can kill people. Plumbing work done improperly can be a problem. The plumbers install systems important to the public safety of the citizens of Washington. These trade licenses have been negotiated with stakeholders with the goal of public safety. Instructions generally recommend using a qualified plumber. There has been a gradual erosion of the licensing laws.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Warnick, prime sponsor; Jim King, WA State HVACR Assn.

CON: Larry Stevens, National Electrical Contractors Assn; Mechanical Contractors Assn; Randy Scott, WA State Pipe Trades; William Mirand, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers 191; Clint Bryson, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers 76.