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House Bill 314: Sponsor Statement Version A (34-LS1490/A) 2/25/26

HB 314 will extend the statutory authorization for the Board of Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors (AELS Board), add Registered Interior Designers to the board's jurisdiction, and make statutory changes requested by the board. This bill will allow the AELS Board to continue the important work of regulating design professionals in Alaska and add a qualified interior designer to the board.

The 2024 Sunset Audit of the AELS Board concluded that the board served the public's interest and recommended that it be extended by eight years. In this bill, the AELS Board is seeking to update outdated language based on their analysis since the last sunset audit.

An important part of HB 314 is the opportunity for qualified interior designers to register with the AELS Board. Those wishing to practice registered interior design in buildings of public occupancy within a regulated scope of services impacting public health, safety, or welfare will now have a pathway to registration. HB 314 will allow designers practicing in public occupancy buildings to be qualified to do so, providing another measure of public safety protection and risk-mitigation for commercial buildings. It will increase the number of design professionals able to work independently within the commercial real estate industry. This legislation does not affect most interior designers—particularly those who work exclusively in residential settings or whose services do not involve issues of public health, safety, or welfare. This legislation adds a Registered Interior Designer seat to the board by removing one member seat currently held by a professional civil engineer. The Board will continue to consist of 11 members.

This legislation allows certified wastewater installers authorized under Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) laws and regulations to continue to design systems with a design flow of less than 1,500 gallons a day without requiring a professional engineer. Alaska statutes already exempt residential design, including wastewater systems, from AELS regulation. While prior legislation included provisions related to design build contracts, this legislation makes no changes to design build contracts.

HB 314 will bring economic benefits by increasing professional employment opportunities, providing incentives to hire Alaskans for professional interior design, attracting high-quality design talent to the state, encouraging small business, and expanding consumer choices for qualified design professionals. HB 314 does not change the requirements or daily practice for any other professional in design or construction, including architects, engineers, contractors, trades people, decorators, or residential designers.

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