

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE LABOR AND COMMERCE STANDING COMMITTEE

March 26, 2020

1:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Click Bishop, Chair
Senator Gary Stevens, Vice Chair
Senator Mia Costello (via teleconference)
Senator Joshua Revak
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 301(L&C)
"An Act relating to certificates of fitness for plumbers and electricians."

- MOVED SCS CSHB 301(L&C) OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 301

SHORT TITLE: ELECTRICIAN & PLUMBER APPRENTICESHIPS

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) SHAW

02/24/20	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/24/20	(H)	L&C
03/09/20	(H)	L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124
03/09/20	(H)	Heard & Held
03/09/20	(H)	MINUTE(L&C)
03/11/20	(H)	L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124
03/11/20	(H)	Moved CSHB 301(L&C) Out of Committee
03/11/20	(H)	MINUTE(L&C)
03/13/20	(H)	L&C RPT CS(L&C) 6DP
03/13/20	(H)	DP: HANNAN, GILLIS, STORY, FIELDS, STUTES, SPOHNHOLZ
03/13/20	(H)	L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124
03/13/20	(H)	<Bill Hearing Canceled>
03/17/20	(H)	BILL REPRINTED

03/21/20	(H)	TRANSMITTED TO (S)
03/21/20	(H)	VERSION: CSHB 301(L&C)
03/22/20	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/22/20	(S)	L&C
03/23/20	(S)	L&C WAIVED PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE, RULE 23
03/24/20	(S)	L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/24/20	(S)	-- Meeting Postponed to 3/25 at 1:30 p.m. --
03/25/20	(S)	L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/25/20	(S)	-- Meeting Postponed from 3/24 at 1:30 p.m. --
03/26/20	(S)	L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE LADDIE SHAW
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Prime sponsor of HB 301.

REPRESENTATIVE ZACH FIELDS
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Cosponsor of HB 30

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:30:05 PM](#)

CHAIR CLICK BISHOP called the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Costello (via teleconference) Gray-Jackson, Stevens, Revak, and Chair Bishop.

HB 301-ELECTRICIAN & PLUMBER APPRENTICESHIPS

[1:30:47 PM](#)

CHAIR BISHOP announced the consideration of CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 301(L&C), "An Act relating to certificates of fitness for plumbers and electricians."

He stated that this was the first hearing and there was a committee substitute (Committee Substitute) to consider after the bill was presented.

[1:31:46 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ZACH FIELDS, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, cosponsor of HB 301, stated that this bill protects the status quo for electrical, plumbing, and pipefitting apprenticeships. He explained that when the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) proposed regulations last December that would have radically shaped the way occupational licensing works for these skilled trades, the industry rose up to urge the department to not create a work-around for these apprenticeships and to not change the trainee to journeyman ratio. The department pulled the regulation package, but said it would continue to look at it. He said he and Representative Shaw, along with 17 other cosponsors, introduced HB 301 to give the skilled workers in this industry more certainty in these uncertain economic times by providing a sound pro-business regulatory environment. He highlighted that the testimony in the House Labor and Commerce Committee was very positive. He said Representative Shaw would discuss the bill's broader relationship to returning servicemembers in the workforce.

[1:33:45 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LADDIE SHAW Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, prime sponsor of HB 301, stated that his interest in the apprenticeship issue was as a veteran who is very aware that uncertainty in the workplace and the lack of transferable skills can lead to unemployment for many military members. Further, the lack of career options has led to many veterans having financial struggles.

He related that the Transition Program, which was available to returning Vietnam Veterans, allowed active duty military members to transition into any field they wanted to enter. It also allowed active duty members to attend a semester of schooling that was paid for by the government. He said HB 301 is in that same vein; it protects veterans seeking new careers as they transition to civilian life. Today, two of the multiple programs that help returning servicemembers enter skilled trades are the IBEW's veteran electrical entry program and the veteran piping program. The IBEW offers both these programs to veterans on active duty at no cost to the veteran. He said HB 301 is critical to ensure public safety for both these workers and those living in homes they built. He confirmed Representative

Fields' statement that there are 17 cosponsors to this legislation as well as many stakeholders across the state.

[1:35:42 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS asked what regulations DOLWD proposed that would have radically reshaped things for these skilled trades.

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS replied the department had two proposals, both of which were unpopular with the industry. One proposal was to change the trainee/apprentice to journeyworker ratio from 1:1 to as high as 10:1. He said people in these highly skilled jobs work with things like high voltage electricity, high pressure boilers, and oxygen lines. From the public safety and worker perspective, mistakes in these jobs can cause loss of life. The proposed 10:1 ratio is inconsistent with the longstanding federal apprenticeship rules and very unpopular in the industry.

The other proposal would allow trainees to get their 8,000 hours of experience outside an apprenticeship program. This is despite the fact that registered apprenticeship is and has been regulated by the federal government for many years. The standards of apprenticeship outline what the work processes are for someone to be a skilled worker in these skilled trades. The alternative proposal would effectively be a workaround to an apprenticeship. Someone could spend 8,000 hours installing electrical boxes but they wouldn't have the skills to be a power lineman or to do utility work. This workaround has been criticized by industry and training programs because it does not provide standards or accountability.

[1:38:15 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS indicated that the explanation was helpful.

CHAIR BISHOP found no further questions and solicited a motion to adopt the CS.

[1:38:25 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS moved to adopt the [Senate] CS for CSHB 301, work order 31-LS1506\0, as the working document.

CHAIR BISHOP objected for an explanation of the changes.

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS replied there is just one substantive change. The plumber utility trainee certificate of fitness is a limited license that is only required for installing utility sewer and water mains for work outside and up to a building. A plumber trainee certificate of fitness covers all the work from

the street where the utility stops through the roof of the structure. Plumber utility work is restricted to work performed up to the building property line. The clarification in the CS is necessary to ensure the bill institutes just the status quo so contractors can continue to work as they have been.

CHAIR BISHOP explained that the exemption in the CS for a plumber utility trainee level certificate of fitness is important because that certificate level covers just the work on the 1.5 inch copper line that runs from the street to the foundation. The work from the foundation on inside the building gets very technical so it is important to maintain the status quo level of training required for the plumber trainee level certificate of fitness.

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS agreed.

[1:40:16 PM](#)

CHAIR BISHOP removed his objection and the CS was adopted. He opened public testimony and asked Senator Costello if she had any comments.

SENATOR COSTELLO, via teleconferenced, expressed appreciation for the bill.

[1:40:47 PM](#)

CHAIR BISHOP closed public testimony.

[1:41:01 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON commented that this is a good bipartisan bill that supports the safety of the public and the workforce. She also expressed appreciation that the chair stepped away from an important finance committee meeting to hear this bill.

SENATOR STEVENS asked if the department was going to speak to the bill.

CHAIR BISHOP said the department was not online but he'd had contact with the commissioner and they understand the bill.

SENATOR REVAK echoed Senator Gray-Jackson's comments.

CHAIR BISHOP thanked Representative Shaw for bringing the bill forward and expressed appreciation of his comments on employment of veterans. He noted that the Marine Corps program, Helmets to Hardhats, initiated in the 2000s for veterans was still going today.

He solicited the will of the committee.

1:42:29 PM

SENATOR STEVENS moved to report the Senate CS for CSHB 301, work order 31-LS1506\O, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s).

CHAIR BISHOP found no objection and SCS CSHB 301(L&C) was reported from the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee.

1:42:51 PM

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Bishop adjourned the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting at 1:42 p.m.