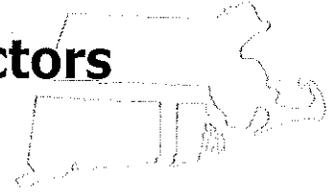




Independent Electrical Contractors of New England, Inc.



TO: The Honorable Gail Slossberg and Rep. Jamie Spallone
Members of the Government Administration & Elections Committee

FROM: Lisa Hutner, Executive Director

DATE: March 16, 2009

RE: HB-6375, AN ACT CONCERNING THE REVIEW AND TERMINATION OF CERTAIN BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

The Independent Electrical Contractors of New England (IEC-NE) strongly **OPPOSES** provisions in HB-6375, which would eliminate the Electrical Examining Board, an occupational licensing board which oversees electrical contractors.

The Electrical Examining Board has been a powerful tool in providing strong, consistent enforcement of the state's electrical licensing and apprenticeship laws. Unlicensed contractors and workers performing work requiring a license or registration should be and have been punished as a result of the efforts of the Electrical Examining Board.

Unfortunately, far too many contractors do not maintain the proper licenses, creating public safety concerns. In addition, individuals who have worked as apprentices but whose employers failed to properly register them, are unable to pursue licensing without repeating their apprenticeship hours. These laws must be vigorously enforced to protect consumers and employees. Having strong occupational licensing boards sends an important signal to unscrupulous contractors that the state's licensing laws can be and will be enforced.

Strong enforcement of the state's licensing and apprenticeship laws relative to electrical work is clearly a life safety issue. Shoddy work done by unlicensed contractors can result in faulty electrical wires and improper grounding of wires which could cause fires that could destroy homes and take lives. By ensuring that individuals performing electrical work are held to high standards, the electrical examining board helps maintain the highest possible level of safety and training for our industry.

The occupational licensing boards, which are comprised of both union and non-union electrical contractors as well as the general public, also provide an important mechanism for ensuring the consistent and fair enforcement of the state's licensing laws. Because the board provides balanced representation of the industry, license holders respect its decisions.

The boards also play a critical role in developing and approving continuing education curriculum to enhance the professionalism and integrity of the electrical industry. This is certainly an important function because electrical accidents have the highest fatality rate of all industrial

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accidents. Relevant continuing education is the only way to ensure that *all* license holders receive training on changes in building codes, laws and regulations and technology which may impact customer safety.

While we recognize that this measure was proposed in order to achieve cost savings, we are puzzled as to what savings would actually be realized. Board members are volunteers, who freely donate their time, as a service to their industry. The state Department of Consumer Protection simply doesn't have the inspectors or agents needed to strongly enforce our licensing laws and to provide the enforcement presence necessary to provide a deterrent to unlicensed contractors and employees.

We therefore urge you to oppose elimination of the Electrical Examining Board. Thank you.