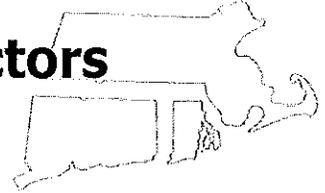




Independent Electrical Contractors of New England, Inc.



TO: The Honorable Thomas Gaffey and Andrew Fleischmann
Members of the Education Committee

From: Lisa Hutner, Executive Director

Date: February 23, 2009

Re: **SB-940, An Act Concerning the CT Technical High School Apprenticeship Program Tuition**

The Independent Electrical Contractors of New England (IEC-NE) *opposes* SB-940, which will double the fees for apprenticeship classroom training.

Apprenticeship training provides vital employment and training opportunities for Connecticut's young people. In Connecticut, more than 1,700 employers employ over 5,500 apprentices in registered apprenticeship programs. These programs serve a diverse population, including minorities, women, youths, dislocated workers and veterans.

In order to become a licensed electrician, an apprentice must complete a four-year apprenticeship program, which includes 720 hours of related classroom instruction. Employers and labor/management sponsors pay virtually all training costs as well as progressively increasing wages to their apprentices – training that is worth an estimated \$40,000-\$50,000 per year to the apprentice. Apprentices in the construction trades pay income taxes on their wages, generating millions of dollars in state and federal tax revenues.

Research demonstrates that apprenticeship training provides several advantages: apprenticeship graduates are typically more educated workers; work more safely and are more productive and better skilled. They are also more likely to earn higher salaries and experience less unemployment than others who have not completed apprenticeship training. Clearly, the state gets a lot of bang for the buck from the nominal funding it provides for apprenticeship training.

Unfortunately, doubling the fees for classroom training will only discourage individuals from pursuing apprenticeship training, making it more difficult to attract people into the skilled trades. This will have negatively impact the skilled trades as well as the overall economy of this state.

We therefore urge you to oppose SB-940.

The Independent Electrical Contractors of New England is the premier trade association representing Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island independent electrical contractors aggressively working with the industry to establish a free environment for merit shop -- a philosophy that promotes the concept of free enterprise, open competition and economic opportunity for all.

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