

Labor

AB 102 (SB 94) – Thermal Insulators Licensing

Rep. Sinicki

Summary of Bill (as amended):

Assembly Bill 102 (Senate Bill 94) requires the licensing and regulation of mechanics who install and maintain thermal system insulation in heating or cooling systems. The bill defines thermal system insulation as a product used in a heating, ventilating, cooling, plumbing, or refrigeration system to insulate any hot or cold surface on or in a building. The bill also requires Commerce to employ a state inspector and establishes a thermal insulation council, which recommends to Commerce the requirements for the licensure of mechanics and recommends training and continuing education requirements for mechanics.

Amendment 1 is a technical correction that changes the effective dates for funding of the state inspector to 2009-10 and 2010-11. *[AA1 to AB 102 adopted 8-0-1; Soletski absent]*

Amendment 2 changes the general contractor position on the Advisory Council to a position of a plumbing, heating or cooling contractor. *[AA2 to AB 102 adopted 8-0-1; Soletski absent]*

Fiscal Effect:

The Department of Commerce estimates the licensing requirements would result in 500 mechanics obtaining licensing, and \$125,000 in annual revenue for the Department. The actual annual costs of the inspector position would be \$88,600. An additional \$20,000 in one-time costs would be needed to accomplish administrative rule promulgation.

Supporters Message:

- The bill will ensure that workers are truly qualified to install thermal insulation around pipes and fixtures.
- With the growing problem of mold and mildew, it is important to protect the public from faulty installation of these products.
- The Department of Commerce already licenses other similar skilled trades.

Opponents Message:

- In a business setting, the bill would mean added costs without a corresponding benefit to operations or safety. Factory personnel may currently do the work of insulation and repairs, but under the bill would need to pay in-house licensed maintenance personnel or hire outside contractors.
- The exemption in the bill for minor repairs is not defined and will be left up to administrative rule.
- Adds government regulation where it may not be necessary.

Key Supporters:

Representative Christine Sinicki (author); Senator Spencer Coggs (author); Heat & Frost Insulators; AFL-CIO; Plumbers Local 75; Painters & Allied Trades; Operating Engineers Local #139; Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors Association of WI; John Find, M.D., Medical College of WI. International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Construction Electrician Local Unions registered in favor on the GAB web site.

Key Opponents:

Associated Builders and Contractors of WI Inc; Associated General Contractors of Greater Milwaukee; WI Paper Council

Committee Vote:

On April 14, 2009, the Senate adopted both amendments and passed SB 94 on a vote of 25-7. On April 16, the Assembly Committee on Labor recommended passage of AB 102, as amended, on a vote of 5-3-1 [Honadel, Nass, and Knodl voted No; Soletski absent].

Ranking Member Author of Bill Summary

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