

**POSITION PAPER IN SUPPORT OF LICENSURE OF CONSTRUCTION
TRADES, SPECIFICALLY ELECTRICAL CONTRACTING**

CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE, THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS THE ISSUE OF CONTRACTOR LICENSING IN PENNSYLVANIA. I REPRESENT THE PENN-DEL-JERSEY CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION (NECA). OUR ORGANIZATION REPRESENTS OVER SIX HUNDRED (600) PROFESSIONAL ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS IN THE EASTERN HALF OF PENNSYLVANIA. OUR CHAPTER, TOGETHER WITH THE WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA CHAPTER OF NECA, COLLECTIVELY REPRESENT THE PROFESSIONAL ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS IN THE ENTIRE STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA. APPROXIMATELY 15,000 PENNSYLVANIANS WORK IN THE ORGANIZED ELECTRICAL CONSTRUCTION TRADE.

THE COMMONWEALTH CURRENTLY ADMINISTERS APPROXIMATELY 27 VARIOUS INDUSTRY LICENSING BOARDS WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE. THESE INDUSTRIES ARE REQUIRED TO OBTAIN A LICENSE MAINLY BECAUSE AN OCCUPATION OR BUSINESS IS SUCH THAT INCOMPETENT OR UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR CAN RESULT IN PERSONAL INJURY, PROPERTY DAMAGE OR BOTH. THE NATURE OF THE ELECTRICAL WORK PERFORMED IN PENNSYLVANIA CERTAINLY FALLS WITHIN THIS DESCRIPTION.

EVERY DAY ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS PERFORM HIGHLY TECHNICAL AND COMPLICATED WORK IN HOMES, OFFICES, SHOPPING CENTERS, CHURCHES AND SCHOOLS. WHETHER IT BE A HOME REMODELING JOB OR WIRING FOR A NEW OFFICE COMPLEX, ONE SIMPLE FACT REMAINS, FAULTY ELECTRICAL WORKMANSHIP CAN RESULT IN EXTENSIVE PROPERTY DAMAGE, PERSONAL INJURY OR WORSE.

OUR COMMONWEALTH INVESTS MILLIONS ANNUALLY IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CONSTRUCTION. THE MAJORITY OF THIS WORK IS BEING DONE BY INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE NOT TESTED OR SCHOOLED IN NEW TECHNOLOGIES. WHILE THE GOAL OF THE RECENTLY ENACTED UNIFORM CONSTRUCTION CODE WAS TO PROTECT THE PUBLIC, IT FAILS TO ENSURE THAT PEOPLE PERFORMING ELECTRICAL WORK KNOW WHAT THEY ARE DOING AND CAN DO IT SAFELY.

TODAY, LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES ARE THE ONLY LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT AUTHORIZED TO LICENSE AN ELECTRICAL CONTRACTOR. THE ONLY WAY A CONSUMER JUDGING AN ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS' COMPETENCY IS TO ASK IF THE CONTRACTOR HAS OBTAINED THE REQUISITE LOCAL LICENSE AND PERMITS, AND THAT'S ONLY IF A LOCAL GOVERNMENT HAS ENACTED SUCH REQUIREMENTS.

BY PLACING THIS RESPONSIBILITY ON OVER 2,500 MUNICIPALITIES, WE HAVE CREATED A SYSTEM THAT LACKS PROFESSIONAL CREDIBILITY AND IS NON-RESPONSIVE AND DANGEROUS TO CONSUMERS. LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ARE UNDER NO OBLIGATION TO INSTITUTE LICENSING. EACH MUNICIPALITY MAKES THEIR OWN DECISION WHETHER TO LICENSE A CONTRACTOR OR NOT. SOME DO AND SOME DON'T. EVEN WITHIN MUNICIPALITIES THAT REQUIRE A LICENSE, THERE ARE A VARIETY OF COMPLIANCE MEASURES THAT CAN RANGE FROM INFORMAL PRACTICES OF COMPLETING AN APPLICATION AND PAYING A FEE TO MORE STRINGENT COMPLIANCE MEASURES OF FILING AN APPLICATION, TAKING A TEST AND PAYING THE FEE.

IN TODAY'S ECONOMY WHEN ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS SERVICE CUSTOMERS IN MULTIPLE COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES, IT IS NOT UNREALISTIC FOR CONTRACTORS TO HOLD 50 DIFFERENT LICENSES. THE COST OF HOLDING MULTIPLE LICENSES, NATURALLY, IS DIRECTLY PASSED ON TO PENNSYLVANIA CONSUMERS WHO RECEIVE LITTLE OR NO BENEFIT.

ANOTHER NEGATIVE ASPECT OF PENNSYLVANIA'S LOCAL LICENSING POLICY IS THAT THERE ARE NO REAL DETERRENTS. INCOMPETENT ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS WHO LOSE A LOCAL LICENSE OR NEVER HAD A LICENSE, AND ARE NOT ABLE TO WORK IN ONE LOCAL

MUNICIPALITY SIMPLY MOVE ON TO THE NEXT COMMUNITY. DISHONEST, INCOMPETENT ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS CAN CONTINUE TO WORK FOR YEARS. THE VICTIMS ARE THE CITIZENS OF PENNSYLVANIA WHO KNOW VERY LITTLE ABOUT ELECTRICITY EXCEPT TO BE AFRAID OF IT. WE BELIEVE THAT BY HAVING REGULATIONS THAT PLACE AN ELECTRICAL CONTRACTOR'S LICENSE FOR THE ENTIRE STATE IN JEOPARDY IF THEY ARE FOUND TO BE IN VIOLATION OF MUNICIPAL CODES, ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS WILL BE MORE ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR WORKMANSHIP AND BUSINESS PRACTICES.

WE BELIEVE ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS WOULD BE MORE LIKELY TO SECURE PERMITS AND COMPLY WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUSINESS PRACTICES IF THEY KNOW THEIR ABILITY TO WORK IN THE ENTIRE STATE WOULD BE AT RISK. A HIGHER LEVEL OF COMPLIANCE WOULD INCREASE REVENUE TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS.

FORTY FOUR (44) STATES, INCLUDING NEW JERSEY AND DELAWARE, REQUIRE ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS TO OBTAIN STATE LICENSING. THESE STATES DETERMINE QUALIFICATIONS AND ADOPT TESTING AND LICENSING REGULATIONS. IN STATES WHERE LICENSING ALREADY EXISTS, ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS ARE REQUIRED TO OBTAIN MANDATORY CONTINUING EDUCATION, TO ENSURE THAT THEY REMAIN

COMPETENT TO INSTALL AND SERVICE INCREASINGLY HIGH TECH AND COMPLICATED SYSTEMS THAT ARE CHANGING AT AN ALARMING RATE.

WE SUPPORT AN ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS LICENSING REQUIREMENT THAT WOULD MEET THE FOLLOWING GOALS:

1). PROVIDE CONSUMER CONFIDENCE BY ASSURING THAT AN ELECTRICAL CONTRACTOR OBTAINED A LICENSE THROUGH A PROFESSIONAL PROCESS.

2). HOLDS ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS ACCOUNTABLE TO PROPERLY SUPERVISE THEIR WORKERS IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE NATIONAL ELECTRIC CODES AND MUNICIPAL ORDINANCES AND HAS PERSUASIVE PENALTIES WHEN AN ELECTRICAL CONTRACTOR HAS BEEN FOUND IN VIOLATION.

3). STANDARDIZE THE LICENSING PROCESS AND ALLOW FOR UNIFORM COMPLIANCE STANDARDS BY CREATING ONE STATE LEVEL ELECTRICAL CONTRACTOR'S LICENSE. LOCAL GOVERNMENTS WOULD CONTINUE TO HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO REQUIRE BUSINESS AND BUILDING PERMITS AND TO INSPECT ELECTRICAL WORK.

4). ALLOW FOR LICENSURE RECIPROCITY WITH OTHER STATES THAT HAVE COMPARABLE STATE LICENSING STANDARDS.

WE SUPPORT PASSAGE OF STATE LICENSING OF ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS BECAUSE IT WOULD ALLEVIATE THE BURDEN OF MULTIPLE LICENSES FOR THOSE ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS THAT OBTAIN THE STATE LICENSE AND IT WOULD PROFESSIONALIZE OUR INDUSTRY. FOLLOWING SUCH A BILL BECOMING LAW, THIS INDUSTRY WOULD AGGRESSIVELY PURSUE AN EDUCATIONAL PROCESS AT THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF ENACTING ORDINANCES REQUIRING THAT WORK PERFORMED IN THEIR COMMUNITIES BE DONE BY A STATE LICENSED ELECTRICAL CONTRACTOR.

ADDITIONALLY, THE ADDED REQUIREMENT OF A JOURNEYMAN LICENSE AND APPRENTICE REGISTRATION WILL ALSO PROFESSIONALIZE OUR INDUSTRY. AN INDIVIDUAL WOULD HAVE THE CHOICE OF WHETHER OR NOT THEY WANTED TO FOLLOW A PROFESSIONAL CAREER PATH OR TO CONTINUE TO WORK UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF A LICENSED JOURNEYMAN OR ELECTRICAL CONTRACTOR.

THE NEED TO HAVE COMPETENT AND KNOWLEDGEABLE PROFESSIONALS CAN NOT BE OVERSTATED AND IS ONE OF THE PRIMARY

REASONS OUR INDUSTRY IS FIGHTING FOR A BONA FIDE STATE LICENSING OF ELECTRICAL CONTRACTOR REQUIREMENT IN PENNSYLVANIA.

FINALLY, I WOULD LIKE TO URGE THIS COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER THIS ISSUE THROUGH THE EYES OF AN ELECTRICAL CONTRACTOR WHO IS OUT THERE EVERY DAY ECONOMICALLY COMPETING AND PROVIDING A VALUABLE SERVICE IN THE MANY COMMUNITIES ACROSS PENNSYLVANIA. NONE OF US WANTS TO SEE NEEDLESS AND COMPLICATED REGULATIONS; HOWEVER, I THINK WE CAN ALL AGREE THAT THERE ARE TIMES WHEN CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES DICTATE THE NEED FOR CHANGE.

OUR ORGANIZATION IS WILLING TO WORK WITH YOU TO OBTAIN THE NECESSARY SUPPORT THAT WILL ACHIEVE OUR GOALS.

I BELIEVE THE ABOVE TESTIMONY ADDRESSES THE MAJORITY OF THE QUESTIONS YOU HOPE TO HAVE COVERED. TO ADDRESS SOME OF THE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS PLEASE ADVISE TO THE FOLLOWING:

1). ERROR AND OMISSIONS INSURANCE COVERAGE IS STANDARD FOR THE ELECTRICAL TRADE.

2). SOME NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS THAT GOVERN THE ELECTRICAL TRADE ARE THE INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS (IBEW), NATIONAL ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION (NECA), AND THE NATIONAL ELECTRICAL CODE (NEC).

3). THE ELECTRICAL TRADE WOULD BE ABLE TO COOPERATE WITH OTHER TRADES IN AN OVERALL "STATE BOARD OF CONSTRUCTION TRADES".

AGAIN, I WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE COMMITTEE FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT THIS TESTIMONY.

Respectfully Submitted,

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