

MINUTES
SENATE COMMERCE & HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

DATE: Thursday, March 18, 2021

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW54

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Patrick, Vice Chairman Souza, Senators Martin, Lakey, Guthrie, Agenbroad, Riggs, Ward-Engelking, and Burgoyne

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: None

NOTE: The sign-in sheet, testimonies and other related materials will be retained with the minutes in the committee's office until the end of the session and will then be located on file with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.

CONVENED: **Chairman Patrick** called the meeting of the Senate Commerce and Human Resources Committee (Committee) to order at 1:32 p.m.

HONORING OF PAGE: **Chairman Patrick** honored Page Joshua Nelson. He asked him to tell the Committee about his experience while at the Senate. **Mr. Nelson** stated he attained a better understanding of how the Legislature functions and how much work it takes to pass a law. He said he learned Senators and Representatives have work to do behind-the-scenes and all are regular people who choose to serve the people of the community.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Martin** asked Mr. Nelson to tell the Committee about his future plans. **Mr. Nelson** indicated he plans to go to Northwest Nazarene University to study either mechanical or electrical engineering. He noted he will graduate from high school this year after being homeschooled his entire life. He introduced his mother, Jennie Nelson.

Vice Chair Souza asked what is the one lesson he learned at the Senate that surprised him the most. **Mr. Nelson** remarked what surprised him was how much must be done to draft legislation. He noted Legislators have other work to do besides attending committee meetings and floor sessions.

Vice Chair Souza and **Chairman Patrick** asked Mr. Nelson to spread the word about the positive aspects of the page program.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Vice Chair Souza** moved to approve the Minutes of March 11, 2021. **Senator Agenbroad** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

H 292 **Relating to Electrical Contractors and Journeymen - To Provide Certain Exemptions.** **Representative Brent Crane (District 13)**, reported this legislation will allow firefighters to replace, maintain, or repair a hard wired smoke or carbon monoxide alarm at the request of a homeowner in one- and two-family dwellings, provided the fire department employee receive annual training regarding electrical safety and installation. He reported this legislation will provide an exemption for the installation or replacement of a fire Digital Alarm Communicator Transmitter (DACT).

Representative Crane noted firefighters provide a service to replace batteries and carbon monoxide detectors. He said if a firefighter finds a hard-wired device that is not working, a battery-operated detector is installed. **Representative Crane** stated he had a conflict of interest pursuant to House Rule 80. He indicated that on page 2, lines 24 to 32 directly affect the business he operates

and all fire alarm contractors.

Representative Crane explained many fire alarms are now monitored through cellular dialers. He said a different technology is replacing what is currently in use. He outlined the approval process for replacing a device. He was able to have fees reduced and the requirement for a set of electrically designed plans eliminated to save the customer money. He explained there was an emergency clause because of a February deadline to replace alarms monitored by cellular dialers. He noted the fire chiefs, firefighters, and the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) are in support of this bill.

DISCUSSION:

Senator Martin queried if a homeowner needed to replace a hard wired smoke alarm and if a firefighter could not replace the alarm, whether the homeowner have to hire someone. **Representative Crane** indicated the purpose of this legislation is to allow a firefighter with the proper training to replace the alarm. He noted senior citizens utilize this service the most. **Senator Martin** and **Representative Crane** discussed the process for replacing various types of fire and carbon monoxide alarms, including DACTs.

Vice Chair Souza asked for an explanation of Section 7 of the **H 292**. **Representative Crane** explained this bill ensures consistency in the law for the State of Idaho with one policy for the replacement of smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

Senator Lakey asked for an explanation of the definition of employee in subsection (h) of the bill. **Representative Crane** explained training for replacement of these alarms can take less than 30 minutes and anyone can be trained to connect the wires. He stated other individuals who have the proper training but do not hold a license could be employed to install the devices. He said if the device is not working, the panel defaults and will not power up.

Senator Guthrie asked for a comparison of sections (g) and (h) on which application is potentially the most dangerous. **Representative Crane** stated section (g) addresses 120 volts and section (h) addresses 12 volts; therefore, section (g) is more dangerous. He said he trusts the firefighters. He noted all units will be powered by a fire alarm panel. **Representative Crane** and **Senator Guthrie** discussed DACT's and that power is converted to 24 volts.

TESTIMONY:

Jeff Fitzloff, electrical inspector and representing himself, testified in opposition to the bill. He stated he did not want tax dollars to be spent on paying firefighters to install smoke alarms, thus taking away work from the electrical industry.

Ron Johnson, Deputy Fire Chief, Nampa Fire Department, testified in support of the **H 292**. He noted he worked with Representative Crane to draft this bill. He said there has been a smoke detector program in place for over 20 years. When this issue came to the attention of the Idaho Electrical Board (IEB) and the State Fire Marshal, the program was cancelled last year, he said. In the past 20 years there have been no instances of malfunction or injuries. **Mr. Johnson** stated all funding comes from grants and donations. He said there is no charge to individuals who receive new alarms, including to senior citizens and the disabled. He remarked firefighters understand electricity and have training.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Agenbroad** asked for an explanation of the training process. **Mr. Johnson** indicated the IEB, Mr. Fitzloff, who is an electrical inspector, and the AFL-CIO have all offered to help train.

Senator Martin asked for information on the average number of detectors installed per year. **Mr. Johnson** stated on average over 600 detectors in 100 to 200 homes have been installed annually.

Senator Burgoyne asked for information on how many man-hours and how much compensation was involved for those who are installing the detectors. **Mr. Johnson** reported three firefighters take approximately half an hour per house total. **Mr. Johnson** stated firefighter salaries range from \$40,000 to the low \$70,000 figures annually. In response to a question by Senator Burgoyne, **Mr. Johnson** said some companies donate the detectors and a local group contributes to the fund. He noted no funds are received by the firefighters that compensate for man-hours. The firefighters are trying to make use of taxpayer dollars to make the community a safer place.

MOTION: **Vice Chair Souza** moved to send **H 292** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Agenbroad** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**. **Senator Burgoyne** requested he be recorded as voting nay.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Patrick** adjourned the meeting at 2:13 p.m.

Senator Patrick
Chair

Linda Kambeitz
Secretary