

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2020 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

Senate Bill 503

INTERIM
BILL

BY SENATORS SYPOLT, CLINE, MAYNARD, PITENBARGER,
STOLLINGS, JEFFRIES, BALDWIN, HAMILTON, LINDSAY,
PALUMBO, WOELFEL, AND FACEMIRE

[Introduced January 15, 2020; referred
to the Committee on Government Organization; and
then to the Committee on the Judiciary]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §29-3B-4 and §29-3B-7 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as
 2 amended; to amend and reenact §29-3C-4 of said code; and to amend and reenact §29-
 3 3D-2 and §29-3D-6 of said code, all relating to removing the use of post-criminal conduct
 4 in professional and occupational initial licensure or certification in decisionmaking; creating
 5 a rational nexus requirement between prior criminal conduct and initial licensure or
 6 certification in decisionmaking; providing criteria for the state Fire Marshal as licensing or
 7 certification authority to determine whether a criminal conviction has a rational nexus to
 8 an occupation; limiting licensure disqualification; authorizing persons to petition the state
 9 Fire Marshal as to whether a person's criminal records precludes licensure; and reducing
 10 the number of necessary hours as a qualification for licensure.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 3B. SUPERVISION OF ELECTRICIANS.

§29-3B-4. Licenses; classes of licenses; issuance of licenses by commissioner; qualifications required for license; nontransferability and nonassignability of licenses; expiration of license; renewal; reciprocity.

1 (a) The following classes of license may be issued by the state Fire Marshal: "Master
 2 electrician license," "journeyman electrician license," "apprentice electrician license" and
 3 "temporary electrician license." Additional classes of specialty electrician license may be issued
 4 by the state Fire Marshal.

5 (b) The State Fire Marshal shall issue the appropriate class of license upon a finding that
 6 the applicant possesses the qualifications for the class of license to be issued. When considering
 7 whether an applicant possess the qualifications for the class of license, the State Fire Marshal
 8 shall consider whether an applicant's prior criminal convictions bear a rational nexus on the
 9 license being sought.

10 (1) The State Fire Marshal may not disqualify an applicant from initial licensure because
 11 of a prior criminal conviction that remains unreversed unless that conviction is for a crime that

12 bears a rational nexus to the activity requiring licensure. In determining whether a criminal
13 conviction bears a rational nexus to a profession or occupation, the State Fire Marshal shall
14 consider at a minimum:

15 (A) The nature and seriousness of the crime for which the individual was convicted;

16 (B) The passage of time since the commission of the crime;

17 (C) The relationship of the crime to the ability, capacity, and fitness required to perform
18 the duties and discharge the responsibilities of the profession or occupation; and

19 (D) Any evidence of rehabilitation or treatment undertaken by the individual.

20 (2) Notwithstanding any other provision of this code to the contrary, if an applicant is
21 disqualified from licensure because of a prior criminal conviction, the State Fire Marshal shall
22 permit the applicant to apply for initial licensure if:

23 (A) A period of five years has elapsed from the date of conviction or the date of release
24 from incarceration, whichever is later;

25 (B) The individual has not been convicted of any other crime during the period of time
26 following the disqualifying offense; and

27 (C) The conviction was not for an offense of a violent or sexual nature: *Provided, That a*
28 conviction for an offense of a violent or sexual nature may subject an individual to a longer period
29 of disqualification from licensure, to be determined by the State Fire Marshal.

30 (3) An individual with a criminal record who has not previously applied for licensure may
31 petition the State Fire Marshal at any time for a determination of whether the individual's criminal
32 record will disqualify the individual from obtaining a license. This petition shall include sufficient
33 details about the individual's criminal record to enable the State Fire Marshal to identify the
34 jurisdiction where the conviction occurred, the date of the conviction, and the specific nature of
35 the conviction.

36 (c) The State Fire Marshal shall propose rules for legislative approval regarding
37 qualifications for testing, issuance of licenses, and renewal in accordance with the provisions of

38 §29A-3-1 *et seq* of this code.

39 (d) To the extent that other jurisdictions provide for the licensing of electricians, the state
 40 Fire Marshal may grant the same or equivalent classification of license without written
 41 examination upon satisfactory proof furnished to the state Fire Marshal that the qualifications of
 42 the applicant are equal to the qualifications required by this article and upon payment of the
 43 required fee: *Provided*, That as a condition to reciprocity, the other jurisdictions must extend to
 44 licensed electricians of this state, the same or equivalent classification.

45 (e) In addition to any other information required, the applicant's social security number
 46 shall be recorded on any application for a license submitted pursuant to the provisions of this
 47 section.

§29-3B-7. Denial of license; suspension and revocation of license.

1 (a) The State Fire Marshal may deny a license to any applicant who fails to comply with
 2 the rules established by the state Fire Marshal, or who lacks the necessary qualifications;
 3 Provided, That the state Fire Marshal shall apply §29-3B-4(b) when determining if an applicant is
 4 eligible for licensure.

5 (b) The State Fire Marshal may upon complaint or upon his or her own inquiry and, after
 6 notice to the licensee, suspend or revoke a licensee's license if:

7 (1) The license was granted upon an application or documents supporting such application
 8 which materially misstated the terms of the applicant's qualifications or experience;

9 (2) The licensee subscribed or vouched for a material misstatement by an applicant;

10 (3) The licensee incompetently or unsafely performs electrical work;

11 ~~(4) The licensee violated any statute of the State of West Virginia, any rule lawfully~~
 12 ~~promulgated by an agency of the State of West Virginia or any ordinance of any municipality or~~
 13 ~~county of the State of West Virginia which protects the consumer or public against unfair, unsafe,~~
 14 ~~unlawful or improper business practices; or~~

15 ~~(5)~~(4) The licensee fails to comply with any rule of the state Fire Marshal promulgated to

16 fulfill his or her responsibilities under this article.

17 (c) Any person aggrieved by an order or decision of the state Fire Marshal under this article
18 is entitled to judicial review as provided by section eighteen, article three of this chapter and by
19 chapter twenty-nine-a of this code.

ARTICLE 3C. CERTIFICATION OF ELECTRICAL INSPECTORS.

§29-3C-4. Certification program; duties of the State Fire Marshal; rulemaking.

1 (a) The State Fire Marshal shall propose rules for legislative approval in accordance with
2 the provisions of §29A-3-1 *et seq.*, of this code to establish a program for the certification of
3 electrical inspectors. Proposed rules shall provide: Standards and procedures for certification,
4 including applications, examinations, fees, qualifications, procedures for investigating complaints,
5 revoking or suspending certifications and for renewing licenses. The State Fire Marshal is also
6 authorized to propose emergency rules to implement the provisions of this article: *Provided, That*
7 the emergency rules specify an initial certification fee of \$50.

8 (b) The State Fire Marshal shall certify an electrical inspector upon a finding that the
9 applicant possesses the requisite qualifications.

10 (c) When considering whether an applicant possess the qualifications for certification as
11 an electrical inspector, the State Fire Marshal shall consider whether an applicant's prior criminal
12 convictions bear a rational nexus on the certification being sought.

13 (1) The State Fire Marshal may not disqualify an applicant from initial certification because
14 of a prior criminal conviction that remains unreversed unless that conviction is for a crime that
15 bears a rational nexus to the activity requiring certification. In determining whether a criminal
16 conviction bears a rational nexus to a profession or occupation, the State Fire Marshal shall
17 consider at a minimum:

18 (A) The nature and seriousness of the crime for which the individual was convicted;

19 (B) The passage of time since the commission of the crime;

20 (C) The relationship of the crime to the ability, capacity, and fitness required to perform
 21 the duties and discharge the responsibilities of the profession or occupation; and

22 (D) Any evidence of rehabilitation or treatment undertaken by the individual.

23 (2) Notwithstanding any other provision of this code to the contrary, if an applicant is
 24 disqualified from certification because of a prior criminal conviction, the State Fire Marshal shall
 25 permit the applicant to apply for initial certification if:

26 (A) A period of five years has elapsed from the date of conviction or the date of release
 27 from incarceration, whichever is later;

28 (B) The individual has not been convicted of any other crime during the period of time
 29 following the disqualifying offense; and

30 (C) The conviction was not for an offense of a violent or sexual nature: *Provided*, That a
 31 conviction for an offense of a violent or sexual nature may subject an individual to a longer period
 32 of disqualification from certification, to be determined by the State Fire Marshal.

33 (3) An individual with a criminal record who has not previously applied for certification may
 34 petition the State Fire Marshal at any time for a determination of whether the individual's criminal
 35 record will disqualify the individual from obtaining a certification. This petition shall include
 36 sufficient details about the individual's criminal record to enable the State Fire Marshal to identify
 37 the jurisdiction where the conviction occurred, the date of the conviction, and the specific nature
 38 of the conviction.

ARTICLE 3D. SUPERVISION OF FIRE PROTECTION WORK.

§29-3D-2. Definitions.

1 As used in this article and the legislative rules promulgated pursuant to this article:

2 ~~(a)~~ "Combination Fire/Smoke Damper" means a device that meets both fire damper and
 3 smoke damper requirements.

4 ~~(b)~~ "Damper" means a fire damper, smoke damper or combination fire/smoke damper.

5 ~~(c)~~ "Damper work" means to install, test, maintain or repair a damper.

6 ~~(d)~~ “Engineered Suppression Systems Installer” means a person certified by a
7 manufacturer to install, alter, extend, maintain, layout or repair an agent suppression system.

8 ~~(e)~~ “Engineered Suppression Systems Technician” means a person certified by a
9 manufacturer to maintain or repair an agent suppression system.

10 ~~(f)~~ “Fire damper” means a device installed in an air distribution system, designed to close
11 automatically upon detection of heat, to interrupt migratory airflow and to restrict the passage of
12 flame. Fire dampers are classified for use in either static systems or for dynamic systems, where
13 the dampers are rated for closure under airflow.

14 ~~(g)~~ “Fire protection damper technician” means a person certified to install, test, maintain
15 or repair a damper.

16 ~~(h)~~ “Fire protection damper technician in training” means a person with interest in and an
17 aptitude for performing installation, maintenance or repair work to a damper as defined in this
18 article, but who alone is not capable or authorized to perform damper work unless directly
19 supervised by a Fire Protection Damper Technician.

20 ~~(i)~~ “Fire protection layout technician” is an individual who has achieved National Institute
21 for Certification in Engineering Technologies (NICET) Level III or higher certification, and who has
22 the knowledge, experience and skills necessary to layout fire protection systems based on
23 engineering design documents.

24 ~~(j)~~ “Fire protection system” means any fire protection suppression device or system
25 designed, installed and maintained in accordance with the applicable National Fire Protection
26 Association (NFPA) codes and standards, but does not include public or private mobile fire
27 vehicles.

28 ~~(k)~~ “Fire protection work” means the installation, alteration, extension, maintenance, or
29 testing of all piping, materials and equipment inside a building, including the use of shop drawings
30 prepared by a fire protection layout technician, in connection with the discharge of water, other
31 special fluids, chemicals or gases and backflow preventers for fire protection for the express

32 purpose of extinguishing or controlling fire.

33 (†) “Journeyman sprinkler fitter” means a person qualified by at least ~~ten~~ 1000 hours of
34 work experience installing, adjusting, repairing and dismantling fire protection systems and who
35 is competent to instruct and supervise the fire protection work of a sprinkler fitter in training.

36 (†) “License” means a valid and current license issued by the State Fire Marshal in
37 accordance with the provisions of this article.

38 (†) “Portable Fire Extinguisher Technician” means a person certified in accordance with
39 NFPA 10 to install, maintain, repair and certify portable fire extinguishers as defined by NFPA 10.

40 (†) “Preengineered Suppression Systems Installer” means a person certified by a
41 manufacturer to install, alter, extend, maintain, layout or repair an agent suppression system.

42 (†) “Preengineered Suppression Systems Technician” means a person certified to
43 maintain or repair an agent suppression system.

44 (†) “Single family dwelling” means a building which is occupied as, or designed or intended
45 for occupancy as, a single residence for one or more persons.

46 (†) “Smoke Damper” means a device within an operating (dynamic) air distribution system
47 to control the movement of smoke.

48 (†) “Sprinkler fitter in training” means a person with interest in and an aptitude for
49 performing fire protection work but who alone is not capable of performing such work, and who
50 has fewer than ~~ten~~ 1000 hours of experience installing, adjusting, repairing and dismantling fire
51 protection systems.

§29-3D-6. Denial, suspension and revocation of license.

1 (a) The State Fire Marshal may deny a license to any applicant who fails to comply with
2 the rules established by the State Fire Marshal, or who lacks the necessary qualifications. When
3 considering whether an applicant possess the qualifications for a license, the State Fire Marshal
4 shall consider whether an applicant’s prior criminal convictions bear a rational nexus on the
5 license being sought.

6 (1) The State Fire Marshal may not disqualify an applicant from initial licensure because
7 of a prior criminal conviction that remains unreversed unless that conviction is for a crime that
8 bears a rational nexus to the activity requiring licensure. In determining whether a criminal
9 conviction bears a rational nexus to a profession or occupation, the State Fire Marshal shall
10 consider at a minimum:

11 (A) The nature and seriousness of the crime for which the individual was convicted;

12 (B) The passage of time since the commission of the crime;

13 (C) The relationship of the crime to the ability, capacity, and fitness required to perform
14 the duties and discharge the responsibilities of the profession or occupation; and

15 (D) Any evidence of rehabilitation or treatment undertaken by the individual.

16 (2) Notwithstanding any other provision of this code to the contrary, if an applicant is
17 disqualified from licensure because of a prior criminal conviction, the State Fire Marshal shall
18 permit the applicant to apply for initial licensure if:

19 (A) A period of five years has elapsed from the date of conviction or the date of release
20 from incarceration, whichever is later;

21 (B) The individual has not been convicted of any other crime during the period of time
22 following the disqualifying offense; and

23 (C) The conviction was not for an offense of a violent or sexual nature: *Provided*, That a
24 conviction for an offense of a violent or sexual nature may subject an individual to a longer period
25 of disqualification from licensure, to be determined by the State Fire Marshal.

26 (3) An individual with a criminal record who has not previously applied for licensure may
27 petition the State Fire Marshal at any time for a determination of whether the individual's criminal
28 record will disqualify the individual from obtaining a license. This petition shall include sufficient
29 details about the individual's criminal record to enable the State Fire Marshal to identify the
30 jurisdiction where the conviction occurred, the date of the conviction, and the specific nature of
31 the conviction.

32 (b) The State Fire Marshal may, upon complaint or upon his or her own inquiry, and after
33 notice to the licensee, suspend or revoke a licensee's license if:

34 (1) The license was granted upon an application or documents supporting the application
35 which materially misstated the terms of the applicant's qualifications or experience;

36 (2) The licensee subscribed or vouched for a material misstatement in his or her
37 application for licensure; or

38 (3) The licensee incompetently or unsafely performs plumbing, fire protection work or
39 damper work; ~~or~~

40 ~~(4) The licensee violated any statute of this state, any legislative rule or any ordinance of~~
41 ~~any municipality or county of this state which protects the consumer or public against unfair,~~
42 ~~unsafe, unlawful or improper business practices.~~

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to remove barriers to employment for individuals with criminal records who seek licensure or certification in an occupation governed by state laws, with certain exceptions and to reduce the number of hours of necessary experience to qualify for certain licenses.

This bill is recommended by the Joint Committee on Volunteer Fire Departments and Emergency Medical Services for introduction and passage during the 2020 Regular Session.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.