

SUBJECT: Reinstating apprentice water well driller and pump installer programs

COMMITTEE: Natural Resources — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 10 ayes — Keffer, Ashby, D. Bonnen, Burns, Frank, Kacal, T. King, Larson, Lucio, Nevárez

0 nays

1 absent — Workman

WITNESSES: For — Gregory Ellis, Mesa Underground Water Conservation District; Ty Embrey, Middle Trinity Groundwater Conservation District, Clearwater Underground Water Conservation District, Panola County Groundwater Conservation District; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Richard Young, City of El Campo Texas.; Dirk Aaron, Clearwater Underground Water Conservation District; Lowell Raun, Coastal Bend Groundwater Conservation District, Texas Rice Producers Legislative Group; Robby Cook, Hemphill County Underground Water Conservation District; Cyrus Reed, Lone Star Chapter Sierra Club; C.E. Williams, Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District; Jim Conkwright, Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District; Stacey Steinbach, Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts; Dean Robbins, Texas Water Conservation Association.; Brian Sledge, Texas Water Conservation Association, Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District, North Texas Groundwater Conservation District, Upper Trinity Groundwater Conservation District, Lone Star Groundwater Conservation District, and Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer Conservation District; J. Thomas Wynn)

Against — None

On — Lee Parham, Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation

BACKGROUND: Occupations Code, ch. 1901 governs water well drillers. Under sec. 1901.251, water well drillers are required to keep legible and accurate well logs in accordance with rules adopted by the Texas Commission on

Licensing and Regulation and on forms prescribed by the executive director.

The well log must be recorded at the time of drilling, deepening, or otherwise altering the well and must contain certain information about the strata and well casing. Within 60 days of completion, the driller must deliver or send by certified mail a copy of the well log to TDLR, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, and the owner of the well or the person for whom the well was drilled.

DIGEST: CSHB 930 would provide the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR) with authority to reinstate its apprentice water well driller program and apprentice water well pump installer program. The bill would require TDLR to adopt rules to reestablish these programs.

CSHB 930 would amend the Occupations Code, ch. 1901, relating to water well drillers, by making various technical changes to the water well driller application process, as well as the following:

- requiring TDLR to offer examinations for a water well driller license year round, rather than at least once a year; and
- eliminating the requirement for a water well driller to submit a well log by certified mail, allowing the driller instead to send the log either by first-class mail or electronically.

The bill also would remove language in current law specifying that TDLR offer water well pump installer license examinations at least once a month or more frequently if more than 10 people petition for an additional examination.

CSHB 930 would take effect September 1, 2015.

SUPPORTERS SAY: CSHB 930 would allow the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR) to reinstate two successful programs that once served as a pathway to licensure for drilling and pump installation professionals.

The apprentice water well driller and water pump installer programs were discontinued in 2012 due to the discovery that TDLR lacked the statutory authority to continue administering them. This bill would give the department the statutory authority to reinstate these apprenticeship programs that are valuable to the well-drilling industry.

There is demand within the industry for TDLR to bring back the programs. Currently, licensed drillers and pump installers are responsible for well and pump installation and are required to be onsite throughout the installation process. The apprenticeship programs would confer to trainees site management and specific experience related to water well drilling and pump installation. The programs would allow for one license holder to supervise multiple drilling and pump installation sites by visiting each twice a day and remaining within two hours' travel time from each.

The apprenticeship programs would encourage business expansion and particularly would enable small businesses to grow and better serve consumers who quickly need wells drilled or water well pumps installed or repaired. In addition, some in the industry do not want the responsibility of holding a license and would prefer to be full-time apprentices.

These programs would allow TDLR to track the training of apprentices before they applied for licensure. Apprentices would be registered through the programs, which would enable them to place their names and registration numbers on the well reports, allowing TDLR to review their work. This would help ensure the training of qualified applicants and the protection of groundwater.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

No apparent opposition.