



Opposition to H. 1004

A Bad and Unnecessary Bill

Union and non-union professional licensed electricians have joined together to oppose H. 1004. The bill excludes the use of licensed electricians when solar electric generation equipment is being installed by creating a new and less experienced class of solar installers.

H. 1004 ...

- radically upends settled law and regulatory decisions,
- threatens the existing and proven safety net of professional licensed electricians, and
- has no safety, cost or employment justification.

For decades the installation of electrical equipment has been highly regulated through a tough electric code and by a cadre of highly educated and professionally licensed electricians. The Board of State Examiners of Electricians has repeatedly determined, based on safety concerns and statutory authority, that only licensed electricians are qualified to install electrical solar generation equipment. It did so to ensure that the entire installation with potentially life threatening direct electrical current is done safely.

The installation of every piece of equipment for electrical solar generation of electricity has significant safety implications which should not be assigned to anyone who is not a licensed professional electrician. People and animals can be

killed or seriously harmed, and property can be destroyed, by improper installation of such electrical equipment.

Some companies want to change this standard through legislation that would create solar “installers” under the state building code – not the electrical code. Overruling the Board’s considered judgment – the expert agency created by the Legislature to make such decisions – H. 1004 upends the historic and essential safety role of licensed electricians. This would be a dangerous substitution of legislation for expert agency decision making.

Proponents of H. 1004 assert that the legislation is necessary to support “green” jobs, as if a licensed electrician working on solar electric installations is not doing a “green” job. Using licensed electricians – union or non-union – has had no negative impact on the development of solar electric generation to date. Scores of solar electric projects have been completed and others are progressing through the regulatory approval process. The Commonwealth’s solar electric goals are surely within reach without cutting corners on safety.

Use of licensed electricians does not increase costs, and currently projects are employing hundreds of such electricians during this economic downturn – all to the good. Creating jobs by compromising safety concerns, bypassing existing law, and eliminating licensed electrical professionals - essentially cannibalizing a vital public safety profession - for installation of solar electric generation is a bad and shortsighted policy choice for the Commonwealth.

H. 1004 compromises public safety, does not advance the solar electrical generation goals of the Commonwealth, is not less costly, and does not result in new jobs – it simply eliminates professional licensed electricians.

H. 1004 should be rejected.

The Foundation for the Safe and Efficient Installation of Green Energy is a coalition of electrical industry leaders, both union and non-union, from Massachusetts. Members include the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the Municipal Electrical Inspectors Association of Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Electrical Contractors Association, and the National Electrical Contractors Association Greater Boston Chapter.