
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 471

AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF APPRENTICES ON PREVAILING WAGE PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS.

SUMMARY

This bill generally requires certain public works contracts to have a specified percentage of their work performed by apprentices. It applies to those contracts entered into or renewed on or after January 1, 2027, for a public works project with a total cost of construction over \$10 million.

Under the bill, a “public works contract” is any agreement that is (1) for constructing, rehabilitating, converting, extending, demolishing, repairing, changing, or improving real property and (2) financed in whole or in part with at least \$150,000 of state funding, such as matching expenditures, grants, loans, insurance, or guarantees. The bill further specifies that its requirement also applies to any UConn project exceeding \$10 million and any construction contract of the constituent units of the state system of higher education that exceeds \$10 million.

More specifically on these contracts, each trade or occupation’s total on-site hours worked by employees who are covered by the state’s prevailing wage law, paid an hourly wage, and directly employed by a contractor or subcontractor must have at least (1) 5% of the on-site hours performed by apprentices after January 1, 2028; (2) 10% of the on-site hours performed by apprentices after January 1, 2029; and (3) 15% of the on-site hours performed by apprentices after January 1, 2030. The bill specifies that this requirement applies separately to each contractor or subcontractor working under a public works contract, and not in an aggregate or project-wide basis.

The bill allows the labor commissioner to grant a limited waiver of this requirement if no responsible and qualified bidder maintaining or

participating in an apprenticeship program is reasonably available for a specific trade or scope of work.

The bill imposes a variety of penalties on contractors and subcontractors who violate its apprenticeship provisions, including civil penalties, withholding payments for contracts, and disqualification from bidding on certain state contracts.

Generally, the state's prevailing wage law requires contractors and subcontractors on certain public works projects to pay their construction workers wages and benefits equal to those that are customary or prevailing for the same work, in the same occupation, in the same town. The bill further specifies that when the labor commissioner determines the prevailing wages required on a public works project, the portion that covers payments, contributions, and member benefits (such as health insurance and retirement benefits) must be determined at the journeyman rate. Current law does not specify a particular rate to be used in this determination.

The bill also makes technical and conforming changes, including removing obsolete exceptions to the prevailing wage law.

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2027

APPRENTICESHIP REQUIREMENT

The bill requires the apprentices working under the bill's covered contracts to be enrolled in bona fide apprenticeship programs that (1) have had at least one apprentice complete the program within the preceding five years and (2) are registered with the state Department of Labor's (DOL) Office of Apprenticeship Training or registered with and approved by the U.S. Department of Labor.

The bill specifies that it does not require an apprenticeship program to qualify as an employee welfare benefit plan under the federal Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA). It also specifies that the use of apprentices must comply with the applicable state or federal law on apprentice-to-journeyman ratios (see BACKGROUND).

The bill allows the DOL commissioner to grant a limited waiver of the bill's apprenticeship requirement through a written finding that no responsible and qualified bidder maintaining or participating in an apprenticeship program is reasonably available for a specific trade or scope of work. The waiver must be limited to the trade or scope of work and not apply to the entire project unless the commissioner makes a written finding for each affected trade. All documentation of the waivers must be kept as part of the contract's public record.

Under the bill, any construction manager, general contractor, or subcontractor for a public works project subject to the bill who fails to maintain or participate in a bona fide apprenticeship program, and is not otherwise exempt under a waiver, cannot be deemed a responsible and qualified bidder (presumably, under the state's contracting laws).

The bill allows the DOL commissioner to adopt regulations to implement these provisions.

PENALTIES

Civil Penalty

The bill subjects any contractor or subcontractor who fails to comply with the bill's requirements for using apprentices on a public works contract to a civil penalty assessed by the DOL commissioner. The penalty amount must be calculated based on the number of apprentice hours required but not performed under the contract, up to \$200 per hour of noncompliance. The bill requires the commissioner, when determining whether to assess a penalty, to consider whether the contractor or subcontractor made a good faith effort to comply with the bill's requirements for using apprentices, including any documented efforts to obtain apprentices from approved programs.

The bill requires the money collected from these civil penalties to be deposited in a workforce training or apprenticeship related account, as determined by the commissioner, to support registered apprenticeship programs.

Withholding Payment

The bill also allows the Department of Administrative Services (DAS), or any other awarding authority (see BACKGROUND), to withhold payment under a public works contract until the contractor or subcontractor complies with the bill's apprenticeship requirements or has paid the civil penalty imposed. (It appears that this penalty would only be available to projects administered by DAS, the Joint Committee on Legislative Management, a constituent unit of the state system of higher education, or the Military Department, but not projects administered by other state agencies (such as DOT) or municipalities.)

Bidding Disqualification

In addition, any contractor or subcontractor found to have willfully or repeatedly violated the bill's apprenticeship requirements may be disqualified from bidding on public works contracts for up to one year (the bill does not further specify a process for how this will be determined).

Relatedly, and specific to DAS-administered projects, the bill (1) prohibits the DAS commissioner from issuing or renewing a pre-qualification certificate to any contractor or substantial subcontractor who is disqualified for this reason and (2) requires the application for pre-qualification to include a statement of whether the applicant has been disqualified for this reason. In general, all contractors performing work in specific classifications must be pre-qualified by DAS before bidding on a state contract estimated to cost more than \$1,000,000.

BACKGROUND

Apprentice Ratios

State law sets a hiring ratio that certain trades must follow. It generally requires a certain number of licensed journeypersons or contractors before another apprentice may be hired in the following trades: electrical; plumbing; heating, piping, and cooling; sprinkler fitter; and sheet metal work. The table below shows the number of licensed journeypersons or contractors a company must have before hiring apprentices. By law, however, a contractor may apply to the

Department of Consumer Protection for ratio relief (CGS § 20-332b, as amended by PA 25-47).

**Table: Hiring Ratios of Apprentices to Licensed
Journeypersons or Contractors**

<i>Apprentices</i>	<i>Licensees (Journeypersons or Contractors)</i>
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	6
5	9
6	12
7	15
8	18
9	21
10*	24*

*If there are 11 or more apprentices, the ratio continues at 1:3 (apprentice to licensees).

Awarding Authority

By law and under the bill, an “awarding authority” is DAS; and, for contracts for the construction of or work on a building or other public work under their respective supervision and control, the Joint Committee on Legislative Management, a constituent unit of the state system of higher education, or the Military Department (CGS § 4b-91).

Related Bills

SB 268 (File 76), reported favorably by the Labor and Public Employees Committee, sets a process for the state comptroller to withhold payment to a contractor or subcontractor who has violated the state’s prevailing wage law.

sSB 356 (File 211), favorably reported by the Labor and Public Employees Committee, makes changes to the record keeping requirements for employers covered by the state prevailing wage law.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 16 Nay 3 (03/20/2026)