

TESTIMONY
In Support of
House Bill 2741 Before the
Commerce, Labor & Economic Development Committee

By Russell Hardy, President
Kansas State Building Trades
February 19, 2018

Thank you, Chairman Mason and Members of the Committee,

My name is Russell Hardy and I have been a Sprinkler Fitter for 21 years. I live in Berryton, Ks. I have lived and raised my kids in Kansas the majority of my life. This bill is first and foremost about Life Safety! And giving Kansas business owners, citizens and property security of a properly installed Sprinkler System. This bill in its simplest form is just a basic certification for the Owner(s) and Installer(s) of a Sprinkler System Company. The states of Oklahoma, Arkansas and Kentucky have enacted similar laws for the reasons I'm about to discuss. Also, Analyst are predicting that construction is going to be at record levels into the future. It is time we put some serious thought into this subject.

First, I'd like to say why this bill is good for our Kansas contractors. I'm not just talking about Fire Sprinkler Contractors but, General Contractors also. Everyone wants the cheapest price on a service, I get that. When General Contractors accept bids they obviously go with the lower bid to be successful in getting the project. Our good Kansas Sprinkler Contractors that pay state taxes, unemployment insurance and keep Kansas citizens employed, are then competing with out-of-state Sprinkler Contractors that have not even registered as a legitimate company with the State. The GC doesn't know the difference from one sprinkler company to the other just that one is cheaper. Cheaper because they are not paying into the state registers, using unskilled labor and installing sprinkler systems not to code? Some of the bigger cities and counties have the resources to vet these companies but the smaller ones, which is the majority of the state, don't have the time money or manpower to check these contractors.

Please allow me to take a minute and back up just a few years. Several years before I entered the trade as a Sprinkler Fitter there were basically three different types of sprinkler heads. What they call an Upright, Pendant and Sidewall Sprinkler. As with everything else technology has changed the Sprinkler Industry, for the better I might add. Today there are thousands of different types of sprinkler heads. Different temperatures ratings, applications and flow characteristics. Not to mention how the codes have changed and many other components to sprinkler systems. The code book started out as just a thin pamphlet. Now you have NFPA

13, 13D, 20, 24 and 25. These are just the most commonly used be sprinkler companies but there are numerous others. As this industry becomes more technical, training and education will make the difference of someone making it safely out of a burning building.

Installers need to have the basic knowledge of how these components work as well as code knowledge. They can't rely on just the blueprint telling them what to do. When you are on a construction site the job changes daily. There are ten other crafts trying to do their job and more often than not there is a conflict. It may be a beam that has been added or another mechanical system that was changed. This may change the routing of the sprinkler pipe or the sprinkler head placement. It takes a qualified installer to make these adjustments and stay code compliant. These decisions might determine if a life or property is lost in the future. Furthermore, it would be impossible for the owner of the company to be on every jobsite to ensure that the installer is doing his job correctly.

Most people just see a sprinkler head sticking out of the wall or ceiling and assume that if there is a fire it will work. We have Sprinklers in the room we're in right now. Will they work? We would all assume so. The only way to know is when there is a fire. We hope the general Contractor didn't hire a guy in a truck just trying to make a buck. Our Sprinkler Contractors here in Kansas do it by the book and shouldn't be punished for it. HB 2741 is not written to discourage companies from doing business in Kansas. It is written to allow for the sprinkler companies to verify with the Kansas State Fire Marshalls Office to ensure they are doing business legitimately and openly. It also, allows for the installer of that company to verify his basic knowledge.

The State of Kansas will benefit from increased revenues from companies who would now have to register. Kansas sprinkler companies will become more competitive now because they can compete equally. Kansas property owners won't be stuck with higher maintenance cost or having to shut down their business due to a faulty system.

I want to thank you for your time today and the work you do for the citizens of the state of Kansas and Please support HB2741.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Russell J. Hardy', written over a horizontal line.

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