

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers



Local Union 304

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Chartered

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Before the Committee on Transportation

Testimony of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 304

In Support of SB 167

Chairman Petersen, Vice Chair Claeys, and Members of the Committee:

The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 304 (Local 304), submits this testimony in support of SB 167.

SB 167 adds utility vehicles engaged in the action of emergency repairs to electrical utility or natural gas equipment to the classification of emergency vehicles. This bill allows these vehicles to be classified this way without a board of county commissioner's designation.

The job these workers do is already dangerous. There are countless risks that these men and women face daily. The simplest error can be disastrous, not to mention outside factors such as distracted or impaired drivers, weather, or other factors out of their control.

Aside from countless near misses across the state, this past summer, a distracted driver rear ended an Evergy service vehicle on North Lyman Rd. here in Topeka. The service man was in the process of climbing into the bucket of the truck and was thankfully not seriously injured. This was in broad daylight, a routine job, not a middle of the night service restoration or emergency repair.

Prior to being brought into this office to serve as Assistant Business Manager in 2004, I was an employee of Kansas Gas Service, where from 1988 on, I worked as a Distribution Journeyman Gas worker. I have had countless near misses while my truck was parked, and I had to return to it for tools or other equipment. Unfortunately, those near misses do not get reported, so we do not really know how close our workers come to being hurt, and how often.

Adding utility vehicles to the “emergency vehicle” classification will hopefully help to reduce a bit of the risks these important workers face, and give them a greater sense of security as they do an already dangerous job in dangerous locations.

We currently have a “Move Over” law in Kansas that covers police, firefighters and paramedics, tow truck operators, and highway maintenance workers. 20 other states, including Missouri and Nebraska, specifically include utility vehicles in their laws.

We believe that SB 167 is an important step in ensuring the safety of Kansas workers, and we are proud to support it along with Evergy, Kansas Gas, and the other utilities that have shown their support for this legislation.

I thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

Sincerely

John Garretson II

Business Manager / Financial Secretary