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SENATE BILL NO. 999

Offered January 11, 2023

Prefiled January 6, 2023

A *BILL to amend and reenact § 54.1-2301 of the Code of Virginia, relating to waterworks and wastewater works operators; license reciprocity.*

Patron—Mason

Referred to Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 54.1-2301 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 54.1-2301. Board for Waterworks and Wastewater Works Operators and Onsite Sewage System Professionals; membership; terms; duties.

A. The Board for Waterworks and Wastewater Works Operators and Onsite Sewage System Professionals shall consist of 11 members as follows: the Director of the Office of Water Programs of the State Department of Health, or his designee, the Executive Director of the State Water Control Board, or his designee, a currently employed waterworks operator having a valid license of the highest classification issued by the Board, a currently employed wastewater works operator having a valid license of the highest classification issued by the Board, a faculty member of a public institution of higher education in the Commonwealth whose principal field of teaching is management or operation of waterworks or wastewater works, a representative of an owner of a waterworks, a representative of an owner of a wastewater works, a licensed alternative onsite sewage system operator, a licensed alternative onsite sewage system installer, a licensed onsite soil evaluator, and one citizen member. The alternative onsite sewage system operator, alternative onsite sewage system installer, and onsite soil evaluator shall have practiced for at least five consecutive years immediately prior to appointment. No owner shall be represented on the Board by more than one representative or employee operator. The term of Board members shall be four years.

B. The Board shall examine waterworks and wastewater works operators and issue licenses. The licenses may be issued in specific operator classifications to attest to the competency of an operator to supervise and operate waterworks and wastewater works while protecting the public health, welfare and property and conserving and protecting the water resources of the Commonwealth.

In the case of an applicant who holds an operator license or certificate issued by any other state, the applicant shall be issued a license on the basis of reciprocity, without examination, for the highest Virginia classification that is generally comparable to an applicant's existing license or certificate, with appropriate credit given for the applicant's education and experience. The Board shall issue a reciprocal license with such classification within 15 days of receipt of a complete application, unless the Board determines that the application does not meet the requirements set by the Board in regulation. If the applicant disagrees with the Board's denial or classification decision, the applicant shall be entitled to an informal fact-finding process and hearing by the Board on the application at the next meeting of the Board or as soon thereafter as the applicant desires to proceed.

C. The Board shall establish a program for licensing individuals as onsite soil evaluators, onsite sewage system installers, and onsite sewage system operators.

D. The Board, in consultation with the Board of Health, shall adopt regulations for the licensure of (i) onsite soil evaluators; (ii) installers of alternative onsite sewage systems, as defined in § 32.1-163; and (iii) operators of alternative onsite sewage systems, as defined in § 32.1-163. Such regulations shall include requirements for (a) minimum education and training, including approved training courses; (b) relevant work experience; (c) demonstrated knowledge and skill; (d) application fees to cover the costs of the program, renewal fees, and schedules; (e) the division of onsite soil evaluators into classes, one of which shall be restricted to the design of conventional onsite sewage systems; and (f) other criteria the Board deems necessary.

E. The Board shall permit any wastewater works operator to sit for the conventional onsite sewage system operator examination.

F. The Board shall adopt regulations to implement the provisions of this section.

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