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HOUSE BILL NO. 1531

Offered January 28, 2000

A BILL to amend and reenact § 32.1-164 of the Code of Virginia, relating to the State Board of Health's program for authorized onsite soil evaluators.

Patron—Dickinson

Consent to introduce

Referred to Committee on Health, Welfare and Institutions

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That § 32.1-164 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:**

§ 32.1-164. Powers and duties of Board; regulations; fees; authorized onsite soil evaluators; letters in lieu of permits.

A. The Board shall have supervision and control over the safe and sanitary collection, conveyance, transportation, treatment, and disposal of sewage, all sewerage systems, and treatment works as they affect the public health and welfare. In discharging the responsibility to supervise and control the safe and sanitary treatment and disposal of sewage as they affect the public health and welfare, the Board shall exercise due diligence to protect the quality of both surface water and ground water. The regulation of sewage, as it may affect the public health, shall be primarily the responsibility of the Board and, in cases to which the provisions of Chapter 3.1 (§ 62.1-44.2 et seq.) of Title 62.1 are applicable, the joint responsibility of the Board and the State Water Control Board in accordance with such chapter. However, upon the final adoption of a general Virginia Pollutant Discharge Elimination permit by the State Water Control Board, the Board of Health shall assume the responsibility for permitting alternative discharging sewage systems as defined in § 32.1-163. All such permits shall comply with the applicable regulations of the State Water Control Board and be registered with the State Water Control Board.

In the exercise of its duty to supervise and control the treatment and disposal of sewage, the Board shall require and the Department shall conduct regular inspections of alternative discharging sewage systems. The Board shall also establish requirements for maintenance contracts for alternative discharging sewage systems. The Board may require, as a condition for issuing a permit to operate an alternative discharging sewage system, that the applicant present an executed maintenance contract. Such contract shall be maintained for the life of any general Virginia Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit issued by the State Water Control Board.

B. The regulations of the Board shall govern the collection, conveyance, transportation, treatment and disposal of sewage. Such regulations shall be designed to protect the public health and promote the public welfare and may include, without limitation:

1. A requirement that the owner obtain a permit from the Commissioner prior to the construction, installation, modification or operation of a sewerage system or treatment works except in those instances where a permit is required pursuant to Chapter 3.1 (§ 62.1-44.2 et seq.) of Title 62.1.

2. Criteria for the granting or denial of such permits.

3. Standards for the design, construction, installation, modification and operation of sewerage systems and treatment works.

4. Standards governing disposal of sewage on or in soils.

5. Standards specifying the minimum distance between sewerage systems or treatment works and:

(a) Public and private wells supplying water for human consumption,

(b) Lakes and other impounded waters,

(c) Streams and rivers,

(d) Shellfish waters,

(e) Ground waters,

(f) Areas and places of human habitation,

(g) Property lines.

6. Standards as to the adequacy of an approved water supply.

7. Standards governing the transportation of sewage.

8. A prohibition against the discharge of untreated sewage onto land or into waters of the Commonwealth.

9. A requirement that such residences, buildings, structures and other places designed for human occupancy as the Board may prescribe be provided with a sewerage system or treatment works.

10. Criteria for determining the demonstrated ability of alternative onsite systems, which are not

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60 permitted through the then current sewage handling and disposal regulations, to treat and dispose of
61 sewage as effectively as approved methods.

62 11. Standards for inspections of and requirements for maintenance contracts for alternative
63 discharging sewage systems.

64 12. Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision 1 above and Chapter 3.1 of Title 62.1, a
65 requirement that the owner obtain a permit from the Commissioner prior to the construction, installation,
66 modification, or operation of an alternative discharging sewage system as defined in § 32.1-163.

67 13. Criteria for granting, denying, and revoking of permits for alternative discharging sewage
68 systems.

69 14. Procedures for issuing letters recognizing onsite sewage sites in lieu of issuing onsite sewage
70 system permits.

71 15. Criteria for approved training courses, testing requirements, and application fees for persons
72 wishing to be authorized onsite soil evaluators.

73 16. Procedures for listing, removing from the list, and reinstating on the list those persons who have
74 successfully qualified to be authorized onsite soil evaluators.

75 C. A fee of \$75 shall be charged for filing an application for an onsite sewage disposal system or an
76 alternative discharging sewage system permit with the Department. Funds received in payment of such
77 charges shall be transmitted to the Comptroller for deposit. The funds from the fees shall be credited to
78 a special fund to be appropriated by the General Assembly, as it deems necessary, to the Department for
79 the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this title. However, ten dollars of each fee shall be credited
80 to the Onsite Sewage Indemnification Fund established pursuant to § 32.1-164.1:01.

81 The Board, in its regulations, shall establish a procedure for the waiver of fees for persons whose
82 incomes are below the federal poverty guidelines established by the United States Department of Health
83 and Human Services or when the application is for a pit privy or the repair of a failing onsite sewage
84 disposal system. If the Department denies the permit for land on which the applicant seeks to construct
85 his principal place of residence, then such fee shall be refunded to the applicant.

86 From such funds as are appropriated to the Department from the special fund, the Board shall
87 apportion a share to local or district health departments to be allocated in the same ratios as provided
88 for the operation of such health departments pursuant to § 32.1-31. Such funds shall be transmitted to
89 the local or district health departments on a quarterly basis.

90 D. In addition to factors related to the Board's responsibilities for the safe and sanitary treatment and
91 disposal of sewage as they affect the public health and welfare, the Board shall, in establishing
92 standards, give due consideration to economic costs of such standards in accordance with the applicable
93 provisions of the Administrative Process Act (§ 9-6.14:1 et seq.).

94 E. Further a fee of \$75 shall be charged for such installation and monitoring inspections of
95 alternative discharging sewage systems as may be required by the Board. The funds received in payment
96 of such fees shall be credited to a special fund to be appropriated by the General Assembly, as it deems
97 necessary, to the Department for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this section. However, ten
98 dollars of each fee shall be credited to the Onsite Sewage Indemnification Fund established pursuant to
99 § 32.1-164.1:01.

100 The Board, in its regulations, shall establish a procedure for the waiver of fees for persons whose
101 incomes are below the federal poverty guidelines established by the United States Department of Health
102 and Human Services.

103 F. Any owner who violates any provision of this section or any regulation of the Board of Health or
104 the State Water Control Board relating to alternative discharging sewage systems or who fails to comply
105 with any order of the Board of Health or any special final order of the State Water Control Board shall
106 be subject to the penalties provided in §§ 32.1-27 and 62.1-44.32.

107 In the event that a county, city, or town, or its agent, is the owner, the county, city, or town, or its
108 agent may initiate a civil action against any user or users of an alternative discharging sewage system to
109 recover that portion of any civil penalty imposed against the owner which directly resulted from
110 violations by the user or users of any applicable federal, state, or local laws, regulations, or ordinances.

111 G. The Board shall establish a program for qualifying individuals as authorized onsite soil evaluators.
112 *The Board's program shall require each authorized onsite soil evaluator to hold a current certificate as*
113 *a Virginia certified professional soil scientist.* The Board's program shall include, but not be limited to,
114 approved training courses, written and field tests, application fees to cover the costs of the program,
115 renewal fees and schedules, and procedures for listing, removing from the list, and reinstating
116 individuals as authorized onsite soil evaluators. To contain costs, the Board shall use or enhance the
117 written and field tests given to Department of Health sanitarians as the testing vehicle for authorized
118 onsite soil evaluators. Until July 1, 2001, a person holding a certificate as a Virginia certified
119 professional soil scientist from the Board of Professional Soil Scientists shall be deemed to be qualified,
120 upon application and demonstration of the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to conduct onsite
121 soil evaluations, as an authorized onsite soil evaluator without completing the Board's training courses

and taking the written and field tests. The Board shall furnish the list of authorized onsite soil evaluators to all local and district health departments.

H. The Board shall establish and implement procedures for issuance of letters recognizing the appropriateness of onsite sewage site conditions in lieu of issuing onsite sewage system permits. Such letters shall state, in language determined by the Office of the Attorney General and approved by the Board, the appropriateness of the soil for a traditional septic or other onsite sewage system; no system design shall be required for issuance of such letter. The letter may be recorded in the land records of the clerk of the circuit court in the jurisdiction where all or part of the site or proposed site of the septic or other onsite sewage system is to be located so as to be a binding notice to the public, including subsequent purchases of the land in question. Upon the sale or transfer of the land which is the subject of any letter, the letter shall be transferred with the title to the property. A permit shall be issued on the basis of such letter unless, from the date of the letter's issuance, there has been a substantial, intervening change in the soil or site conditions where the septic system or other onsite sewage system is to be located. The Board, Commissioner, and the Department shall accept evaluations from authorized onsite soil evaluators for the issuance of such letters, if they are produced in accordance with the Board's established procedures for issuance of letters. The Department shall issue such letters within twenty working days of the application filing date when evaluations produced by authorized onsite soil evaluators are submitted as supporting documentation. The Department shall not be required to do a field check of the evaluation prior to issuing such a letter or a permit based on such letter; however, the Department may conduct such field analyses as deemed necessary to protect the integrity of the Commonwealth's environment. Applicants for such letters in lieu of onsite sewage system permits shall pay the fee established by the Board for the letters' issuance and, upon application for a septic system permit or other onsite sewage system permit, shall pay the permit application fee.

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