

ALLOW LOG WALLS IN RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

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Senate Bill 570 (as reported without amendment)

Sponsor: Sen. Mike Green

House Committee: Regulatory Reform

Senate Committee: Regulatory Reform

Complete to 6-11-12

A SUMMARY OF SENATE BILL 570 AS REPORTED FROM COMMITTEE 6-6-12

Senate Bill 570 would add a new section to the State Construction Code Act (1972 PA 230) to allow for the construction of log walls in residential buildings under certain conditions.

Specifically, log walls could be built in residential buildings as long as the walls meet all of the following requirements:

- The minimum average wall thickness is at least 5 inches.
- The walls comply with the International Code Council standard for the design and construction of log structures.
- The area weighted average U-factor for fenestration products is a maximum of 0.31.
- All energy efficiency requirements of the Construction Code Act and promulgated rules applicable to components other than log walls are met.
- The building heating equipment is qualified under the Energy Star program and meets or exceeds the following U.S. Department of Energy ratings:
 - For a gas furnace, an annual fuel utilization efficiency (AFUE) of 90.
 - For an oil furnace, an AFUE of 85.
 - For a boiler, an AFUE of 85.
 - For a split system air source heat pump, an 8.2 heating seasonal performance factor (HSPF).
 - For a closed loop water-to-air geothermal heat pump, an energy efficiency rating of 14.1 and a coefficient of performance of 3.3.
 - For an open loop water-to air geothermal heat pump, an energy efficiency rating of 16.2 and a coefficient of performance of 3.6.
 - For a closed loop water-to-water geothermal heat pump, an energy efficiency rating of 15.1 and a coefficient of performance of 3.0.
 - For an open loop water-to-water geothermal heat pump, an energy efficiency rating of 19.1 and a coefficient of performance of 3.4.
 - For a direct geothermal exchange, an energy efficiency rating of 15.0 and a coefficient of performance of 3.5.

Proposed MCL 125.1513f

FISCAL IMPACT:

Senate Bill 570 would not have a significant fiscal impact on the Bureau of Construction Codes or local units of government.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION:

According to testimony, the 2009 International Energy Conservation Code has been widely adopted across the county, partly as a requirement to qualify for federal energy efficiency funding. However, the 2009 code contained energy efficiency ratings that have made it all but impossible to build traditional log homes. This bill is intended to specifically address energy ratings for log homes (and thus make it possible for new construction) while maintaining the state's compliance with federal guidelines for energy efficiency funding.

As required under statute, codes are reviewed and new provisions are promulgated and adopted on a three-year basis with public input. There was significant concern during committee testimony that the Legislature not exert more control over the promulgation and adoption of building and energy codes.

POSITIONS:

Michigan Home Builders Association testified in support of the bill. (6-6-12)

Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs is neutral on the bill. (6-6-12)

Legislative Analyst: Jeff Stoutenburg
Fiscal Analyst: Paul Holland

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