

Sponsor Statement for SB 270

Board Of Dispensing Opticians

An Act extending the termination date of the Board of Dispensing Opticians; relating to the regulation of dispensing opticians; and providing for an effective date.

Released: February 7, 2002
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Alaska Statute 08.71.010 established the State Board of Dispensing Opticians in 1973 to regulate and control the practice of opticians in Alaska. The Board promotes the competent and safe practice of opticianry. The Board currently oversees 99 licensed opticians and approximately 158 apprentices.

The Board consists of four licensed Opticians and one public member appointed by the governor. It regulates the practice of opticianry in the state by setting education, training, and work experience standards necessary for an individual to be licensed. Such standards provide reasonable assurance that persons licensed as opticians are qualified.

An audit was conducted and released by the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee on January 24, 2002. The audit expressed several concerns with the Board, mainly in regards to the Board's examination process and the amount of apprenticeship hours required for licensure. SB 270 reduces the number of hours required and removes the Board's state examination replacing it with successful completion of the national exams. It also allows a candidate who has earned an associate degree from a school of optometry to become licensed in Alaska after passing the national exams, but removes the mandate that the candidate also complete 2,000 hours of apprenticeship.

Under AS 08.03.010, Termination of State Boards and Commissions, the State Board of Dispensing Opticians is set to expire June 30, 2002. If the Legislature does not act to extend the Board, it will have one year, until June 30, 2003, to administratively conclude its affairs. Senate Bill 270 will extend the Board for three years and makes changes to its licensure requirements..