



## MEMORANDUM

June 25, 2021

---

**To:** Board Members  
**From:** Patty Mamola, Executive Director  
**Subject:** Consider BDR for NRS 338.173 relating to Certificates of Eligibility

---

### Background

During the 2011 legislative session SB 268 created a statute to provide local preference for engineering and lands surveying firms when competing for public works projects. The statute references a Certificate of Eligibility to be issued to design professionals by the board who had met an excise tax payment minimum threshold over a period of time as a means of preference. The statute also contains a section stating that the board shall adopt regulations to issue Certificates of Eligibility.

Regulations were proposed by the board despite fatal flaws in the statute. During the public comment process and the Legislative Counsel Bureau hearing to adopt the regulations, the fatal flaws were highlighted, and it was realized that the practical application of the statute conflicted with its original intent.

In late October of 2011, the Legislative Counsel Bureau sent a memo to the board deferring regulations relating to the issuance of Certificates of Eligibility until further notice. The reason given by the LCB was that the dollar amount of the annual tax requirement was at a level that would exclude small local firms from meeting the qualification necessary to receive the preference.

### Discussion

The statute is frequently referenced in agency Request for Proposal documents. Professionals proposing on public works projects contact the board enquiring about a local preference Certificate of Eligibility—only to be informed that there is no process for issuance and that the certificate does not actually exist.

No further guidance has been received from the Legislative Counsel Bureau and no amendment has been proposed by the original sponsor of SB 268, Senator John Lee. The board's Legislative Committee recommends the board pursue a remedy.

### Proposed Action

The board to consider a bill draft request—in collaboration with the other impacted professional boards—to propose amended language or repeal of the statute.

## **PREFERENCE WHEN COMPETING FOR PUBLIC WORKS**

### **NRS 338.173 Certificate of eligibility to receive preference when competing for public works to certain design professionals: Issuance; duration; ineligibility for submission of false information; regulations; fees; written objections.**

1. The State Board of Architecture, Interior Design and Residential Design shall issue a certificate of eligibility to receive a preference when competing for public works to a person who holds a certificate of registration to engage in the practice of architecture pursuant to the provisions of chapter 623 of NRS and submits to the Board an affidavit from a certified public accountant setting forth that the person has, while holding a certificate of registration to engage in the practice of architecture in this State:

(a) Paid directly, on his or her own behalf the excise tax imposed upon an employer by NRS 363B.110 of not less than \$1,500 for each consecutive 12-month period for 36 months immediately preceding the submission of the affidavit from the certified public accountant; or

(b) Acquired, by purchase, inheritance, gift or transfer through a stock option plan, all the assets and liabilities of a viable, operating business that engages in the practice of architecture that:

(1) Satisfies the requirements of NRS 623.350; and

(2) Possesses a certificate of eligibility to receive a preference when competing for public works.

2. The State Board of Landscape Architecture shall issue a certificate of eligibility to receive a preference when competing for public works to a person who holds a certificate of registration to engage in the practice of landscape architecture pursuant to the provisions of chapter 623A of NRS and submits to the Board an affidavit from a certified public accountant setting forth that the person has, while holding a certificate of registration to engage in the practice of landscape architecture in this State:

(a) Paid directly, on his or her own behalf the excise tax imposed upon an employer by NRS 363B.110 of not less than \$1,500 for each consecutive 12-month period for 36 months immediately preceding the submission of the affidavit from the certified public accountant; or

(b) Acquired, by purchase, inheritance, gift or transfer through a stock option plan, all the assets and liabilities of a viable, operating business that engages in the practice of landscape architecture that:

(1) Satisfies the requirements of NRS 623A.250; and

(2) Possesses a certificate of eligibility to receive a preference when competing for public works.

3. The State Board of Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors shall issue a certificate of eligibility to receive a preference when competing for public works to a professional engineer or professional land surveyor who is licensed pursuant to the provisions of chapter 625 of NRS and submits to the

Board an affidavit from a certified public accountant setting forth that the professional engineer or professional land surveyor has, while licensed as a professional engineer or professional land surveyor in this State:

(a) Paid directly, on his or her own behalf the excise tax imposed upon an employer by NRS 363B.110 of not less than \$1,500 for each consecutive 12-month period for 36 months immediately preceding the submission of the affidavit from the certified public accountant; or

(b) Acquired, by purchase, inheritance, gift or transfer through a stock option plan, all the assets and liabilities of a viable, operating business that engages in engineering or land surveying that:

(1) Satisfies the requirements of NRS 625.407; and

(2) Possesses a certificate of eligibility to receive a preference when competing for public works.

4. For the purposes of complying with the requirements set forth in paragraph (a) of subsection 1, paragraph (a) of subsection 2 and paragraph (a) of subsection 3, a person shall be deemed to have paid:

(a) The excise tax imposed upon an employer by NRS 363B.110 by an affiliate or parent company of the person, if the affiliate or parent company also satisfies the requirements of NRS 623.350, 623A.250 or 625.407, as applicable; and

(b) The excise tax imposed upon an employer by NRS 363B.110 by a joint venture in which the person is a participant, in proportion to the amount of interest the person has in the joint venture.

5. A design professional who has received a certificate of eligibility to receive a preference when competing for public works pursuant to subsection 1, 2 or 3 must, at the time for the renewal of his or her professional license or certificate of registration, as applicable, pursuant to chapter 623, 623A or 625 of NRS, submit to the applicable licensing board an affidavit from a certified public accountant setting forth that the design professional has, during the immediately preceding 12 months, paid the taxes required pursuant to paragraph (a) of subsection 1, paragraph (a) of subsection 2 or paragraph (a) of subsection 3, as applicable, to maintain eligibility to hold such a certificate.

6. A design professional who fails to submit an affidavit to the applicable licensing board pursuant to subsection 5 ceases to be eligible to receive a preference when competing for public works unless the design professional reapplies for and receives a certificate of eligibility pursuant to subsection 1, 2 or 3, as applicable.

7. If a design professional holds more than one license or certificate of registration, the design professional must submit a separate application for each license or certificate of registration pursuant to which the design professional wishes to qualify for a preference when competing for public works. Upon issuance, the certificate of eligibility to receive a preference when competing for public works becomes part of the design professional's license or certificate of registration for which the design professional submitted the application.

8. If a design professional who applies to a licensing board for a certificate of eligibility to receive a preference when competing for public works pursuant to subsection 1, 2 or 3 submits false information to the licensing board regarding the required payment of taxes, the design professional is not eligible to receive a preference when competing for public works for a period of 5 years after the date on which the licensing board becomes aware of the submission of the false information.

9. The State Board of Architecture, Interior Design and Residential Design, the State Board of Landscape Architecture and the State Board of Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors shall adopt regulations and may assess reasonable fees relating to their respective certification of design professionals for a preference when competing for public works.

10. A person or entity who believes that a design professional wrongfully holds a certificate of eligibility to receive a preference when competing for public works may challenge the validity of the certificate by filing a written objection with the public body which selected, for the purpose of providing services for a public work, the design professional who holds the certificate. A written objection authorized pursuant to this subsection must:

(a) Set forth proof or substantiating evidence to support the belief of the person or entity that the design professional wrongfully holds a certificate of eligibility to receive a preference when competing for public works; and

(b) Be filed with the public body not later than 3 business days after:

(1) The date on which the public body makes available to the public pursuant to subsection 3 of NRS 338.1725 the information required by that subsection, if the design-build team of which the design professional who holds the certificate is a part was selected as a finalist pursuant to NRS 338.1725;

(2) The date on which the Department of Transportation makes available to the public pursuant to subsection 3 of NRS 408.3885 the information required by that subsection, if the design-build team of which the design professional who holds the certificate is a part was selected as a finalist pursuant to NRS 408.3885; or

(3) The date on which the licensing board which issued the certificate to the design professional posted on its Internet website the information required by NRS 338.1425, if the design professional is identified in that information as being selected for a contract governed by NRS 338.155.

11. If a public body receives a written objection pursuant to subsection 10, the public body shall determine whether the objection is accompanied by the proof or substantiating evidence required pursuant to paragraph (a) of that subsection. If the public body determines that the objection is not accompanied by the required proof or substantiating evidence, the public body shall dismiss the objection and the public body or its authorized representative may proceed immediately to award the contract. If the public body determines that the objection is accompanied by the required proof or substantiating evidence, the public body shall determine whether the design professional qualifies for the certificate pursuant to the provisions of this section and the public body or its authorized representative may proceed to award the contract accordingly. (Added to NRS by 2011, 3678)