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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 5, 2008

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Governor Signs Electrician Licensing Bill

Electrical safety and consumer protection measure becomes law

Madison – A measure requiring electricians and electrical contractors to be licensed by the state was signed into law today by Governor Jim Doyle.

Authored by Representative Al Ott (R-Forest Junction) and Senator Russ Decker (D-Weston), Senate Bill 167 (SB 167) aims to improve electrical safety by instituting a statewide licensing requirement for electricians and electrical contractors. The licensing structure is similar to that currently in place for plumbers.

Signed into law as 2007 Wisconsin Act 63, the measure will require electricians and electrical contractors to join the ranks of other state licensed professionals such as plumbers, accountants and real estate agents.

“I am very pleased that the Governor acted promptly in signing this important piece of legislation,” said Ott. “This initiative is, first and foremost, about safety. In turn, it is about providing consumers with the assurance that those who are billing themselves as electricians and electrical contractors actually have the skills and knowledge necessary to perform this type of work,” added Ott.

In order to be licensed as an electrician under the new law, a person must either complete an apprenticeship program or have a minimum amount of experience in installing, repairing, and maintaining electrical wiring, and pass an examination administered by the Department of Commerce. Thirty-four other states, including Minnesota and Michigan, currently have licensing requirements for electricians.

In addition to the licensing requirements, the new law directs the Department of Commerce to create a statewide electrical wiring code that establishes standards for installing, repairing, and maintaining electrical wiring. The measure also calls for the development of standards for the inspection of all electrical wiring, and requires that electrical inspectors be certified by the Department.

“This licensing requirement, along with increased electrical inspection, will go a long way toward improving the quality and safety of electrical wiring in Wisconsin,” Ott said.

The new law has significant backing from electricians, electrical contractors, labor unions, utilities, electric cooperatives, farm groups and others who are interested in improving the safety and quality of electrical wiring in Wisconsin. Representative Ott expressed his gratitude to the stakeholders for their support of the licensing initiative.

The new licensing law will be fully implemented in five years. The delay will give the Department of Commerce time to develop administrative rules and will provide ample opportunity for those electricians and electrical contractors who are not already licensed to take the steps necessary to become licensed.

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