



Regional Fire Authority Incentives

Background

In 2004, the Legislature created Regional Fire Protection Service Authorities (RFAs). Codified under RCW 52.26, the Legislature made the following findings: (1) The ability to respond to emergency situations by many of Washington state's fire protection jurisdictions has not kept up with the state's needs, particularly in urban regions; (2) Providing a fire protection service system requires a shared partnership and responsibility among the federal, state, local, and regional governments and the private sector; (3) There are efficiencies to be gained by regional fire protection service delivery while retaining local control; and (4) Timely development of significant projects can best be achieved through enhanced funding options for regional fire protection service agencies, using already existing taxing authority to address fire protection emergency service needs and new authority to address critical fire protection projects and emergency services.

Since its inception, RFAs have been utilized to great success by a number of jurisdictions throughout Washington State. Unfortunately, inequities with certain provisions governing fire districts, as well as lack of clarity in the formation process, has sometimes acted as a disincentive to form the RFA.

Purpose of Legislation

This bill would remove a number of disincentives to the formation of RFAs by equalizing certain provisions with existing laws governing fire protection districts and by clarifying the formation process. Specifically, this bill would accomplish five things: (1) Allow existing RFAs to serve as a "participating jurisdiction" for the purposes of formation, allowing two existing RFAs to merge; (2) Allow for a simple majority for the renewal of an existing fire benefit charge (FBC) after imposition by a super majority of the voters, thus bringing RFAs in line with existing law for fire districts; (3) Allow the RFA planning committee to hold the public hearing on a proposed FBC if the FBC is part of the initial formation of the RFA (primarily a technical fix); (4) Allow for pro-rationing protection for the RFA above the \$5.90 like a fire district if the RFA is operating with the \$1.50 limit; and (5) Allow for protection of the 101% capacity should a FBC renewal fail, bringing RFAs in line with existing law for fire districts.

Support of all Fire Service

WFC has worked closely with our fire service partners, including the Washington State Council of Firefighters, the Washington Fire Commissioners Association, and the Washington State Firefighters Association to create a priority bill supported by the entire fire service community.

For further information, please contact:

J. Dylan Doty, WFC Lobbyist
206-790-6492
dylandoty@gmail.com

Wayne Senter, WFC Executive Director
360-352-0161
wayne@washingtonfirechiefs.org

The Washington Fire Chiefs Association urges your support of this important legislation.