

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6285

As Passed Senate, February 11, 1998

Title: An act relating to benefit charges imposed by fire protection districts.

Brief Description: Revising provisions relating to imposition of benefit charges by fire protection districts.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Government Operations (originally sponsored by Senators Goings, McCaslin, Haugen, Winsley, Patterson and Rasmussen).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations: 1/29/98, 2/3/98 [DPS].
Passed Senate, 2/11/98, 48-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6285 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators McCaslin, Chair; Hale, Vice Chair; Anderson, Haugen, Horn, Patterson and T. Sheldon.

Staff: Eugene Green (786-7405)

Background: The board of commissioners of a fire protection district may impose a benefit charge for up to six years on personal property and improvements to real property if the benefit charge is approved by 60 percent majority of the voters of the district voting at a general election or a special election. If the benefit charge is imposed, a fire protection district is prohibited from imposing a third property tax levy not exceeding 50 cents per thousand dollars of assessed value. The benefit charge may not exceed 60 percent of the district's operating budget.

A benefit charge must be reasonably proportioned to the measurable benefits to property resulting from the services afforded by the district.

Even if a ballot proposition is for reauthorization of a benefit charge, the ballot proposition must read (in part) . . . be authorized to impose benefit charges . . .-

Summary of Bill: It is clarified that the benefit charge on any single property may be compiled into a single charge, but the fire protection district must provide an itemized list of charges for each measurable benefit upon request of the property owner.

Fire protection districts renewing the benefit service charge may use an alternative ballot which reads (in part) . . . be authorized to 'continue voter-authorized' benefit charges . . .-

A fire protection district that discontinues the use of a service charge is allowed to set its third \$0.50 levy at the amount which would have been allowed under the 106 percent limitation if the levy, rather than the benefit charge, had been imposed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: These are small necessary changes to enhance the administration of the benefit charge. The alternative ballot title better reflects what the fire protection district is asking for.

Testimony Against: People do not understand what they are paying for.

Testified: PRO: Michael Prelz, Central Pierce Fire & Rescue; Wally Miller, consultant; Fred Baker, Fire Chief, King County Fire District 16; CON: Ronald Brand.