

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1584

As Passed House:

March 9, 1999

Title: An act relating to fire protection districts.

Brief Description: Allowing unincorporated territory adjacent to a fire protection district to be annexed.

Sponsors: Representatives Hurst, Mulliken, Scott, Stensen and O'Brien.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Local Government: 2/15/99, 2/24/99 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/9/99, 96-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows fire protection districts to annex adjacent (rather than contiguous) unincorporated areas under the election method of annexation.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Mulliken, Republican Co-Chair; Scott, Democratic Co-Chair; Doumit, Democratic Vice Chair; Mielke, Republican Vice Chair; Edwards; Ericksen; Fisher and Fortunato.

Staff: Caroleen Dineen (786-7156).

Background:

Fire protection districts are created to provide fire prevention, fire suppression and emergency medical services within the districts' boundaries. Fire protection districts are governed by a board of commissioners consisting of either three or five members.

Fire protection districts serve residents outside of cities or towns, except when cities and towns have been annexed into a fire protection district or when the district continues to

provide service to a newly incorporated area. The districts finance their activities and facilities by imposing regular property taxes, excess voter-approved property tax levies, and benefit charges.

A fire protection district may annex territory under various methods:

- **Unincorporated Area/Election.** For property contiguous to the fire protection district and not within the boundaries of any city, town or other fire protection district, an annexation process may commence with a petition to the district signed by 15 percent of the qualified registered voters residing within the territory proposed for annexation. If the fire protection district commissioners concur, the petition is submitted to the county legislative authority or boundary review board and, if approved, to the voters of territory proposed for annexation at a special election.
- **Unincorporated Area/Petition.** Alternatively, property contiguous to the fire protection district may be annexed by the district upon petition signed by owners of at least 60 percent of the land proposed for annexation. The fire protection district commissioners may accept the petition and hold a public hearing on the petition. The district may adopt a resolution to annex all or a portion of the proposed annexation property, and the district's action is subject to review by the county legislative authority or boundary review board.
- **Contiguous City or Town.** A city or town with population fewer than 100,000 and contiguous to a fire protection district may by ordinance seek annexation to the district. A special election on the annexation is held within the city or town and the district.

Summary of Bill:

For unincorporated property annexed according to the election method, the description of property subject to fire protection district annexation is amended. A fire protection district may annex territory under this method if that property is adjacent to the district and not within any city, town or other fire protection district by the statutory procedures. The description of property subject to annexation under other methods (i.e., contiguous unincorporated area or contiguous city or town) is not changed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: This bill corrects a technicality that is causing problems for some fire protection districts. This bill allows fire protection districts to annex an area that does not touch the boundaries of a fire protection district. Areas not included within fire protection districts have high insurance premiums. Currently property owners seeking to annex to an existing fire protection district would have to first create a district and then have the new district merge with the existing district. There are situations in both Pierce County and King County that this bill would resolve by allowing existing districts to provide service to unprotected areas.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Hurst, prime sponsor; Duane Malo, Washington State Association of Fire Chiefs; and Dan Packer, East Pierce Fire Rescue.