

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## HB 2642

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Labor, Commerce & Financial Institutions, February 21, 2002

**Title:** An act relating to notifying employers of volunteer fire fighter service.

**Brief Description:** Requiring volunteer fire fighters to notify their employers of their volunteer service.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Hurst and Haigh.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Labor, Commerce & Financial Institutions: 2/21/02 [DP, DNP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, COMMERCE & FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

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**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Prentice, Chair; Keiser, Vice Chair; Franklin, Gardner, Hochstatter, Rasmussen, Regala and Winsley.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Benton.

**Staff:** Matthew Adams (786-7784)

**Background:** In Washington, employment is generally "terminable at-will." In other words, an employer may discharge an employee at any time without cause, and an employee may quit employment at any time without cause. Exceptions to these general rules have been enacted by Congress and the Legislature and recognized by Washington courts.

One exception recently enacted by the Legislature involves volunteer fire fighters. This exception prohibits an employer of 20 or more employees from discharging or disciplining a volunteer fire fighter because of leave taken related to a fire or an emergency. A volunteer fire fighter who believes he or she was wrongly discharged or disciplined may file a complaint with the director of the Department of Labor and Industries. In some circumstances, the volunteer fire fighter may also bring an action against his or her employer.

**Summary of Bill:** A volunteer fire fighter may not file a complaint or bring an action for wrongful discharge or discipline because of leave taken related to a fire or an emergency unless he or she notifies his or her employer of his or her volunteer service. The volunteer fire fighter must have given such notice within a reasonable time of accepting employment or beginning his or her volunteer service.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

**Testimony For:** This bill makes necessary technical changes to the notification requirement. It will also help small businesses.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** PRO: Rep. Hurst, prime sponsor; Mark Johnson, NFIB (for Gary Smith, IBA); Clif Finch, AWB.