

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5432

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As Passed Senate, February 13, 2008

**Title:** An act relating to allowing fire protection districts to have additional fire commissioners.

**Brief Description:** Allowing fire protection districts to have additional commissioners.

**Sponsors:** Senators Swecker, Roach, Hatfield, Zarelli, Kline, Brandland, Benton and Rasmussen.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Government Operations & Elections: 2/20/07 [DP].  
Passed Senate: 2/13/08, 49-0.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Fairley, Chair; Oemig, Vice Chair; Roach, Ranking Minority Member; Benton, Kline, Pridemore and Swecker.

**Staff:** Sharon Swanson (786-7447)

**Background:** A fire protection district is a political subdivision of the state, typically located in an unincorporated area, with responsibility to provide fire prevention and suppression services, and emergency medical response. A fire protection district has all the powers and duties of a municipal corporation, including taxation, eminent domain, and the authority to enter contracts.

The affairs of a fire protection district are managed by a board of fire commissioners composed of three registered voters residing in the district. If the three member board determines by resolution that it is in the best interest of the district to increase the number of commissioners from three to five, or if the board is presented with a petition signed by 10 percent of the registered voters residing within the district, the board shall submit a resolution to the county legislative authority, requesting that an election be held.

If a simple majority of voters approve a ballot proposition authorizing the creation of commissioner districts, three commissioner districts must be created for a fire protection district, and five commissioner districts must be created for a fire protection district with five commissioners.

**Summary of Bill:** The board of fire commissioners for a fire protection district may increase the number of commissioners to seven.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

When a board of fire commissioners that has commissioner districts has been increased to seven, the board of fire commissioners must divide the fire protection district into seven commissioner districts before it appoints the four additional fire commissioners.

Fire commissioner districts with seven commissioners can decrease the size of their board by resolution or by election from seven to five or five to three.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: Fire protection districts continue to grow and consolidate to better utilize their resources. Consolidation and merger are the future of fire protection districts. The flexibility to increase our commissioner number to seven will assist us in managing the consolidation of multiple fire districts. Currently, some districts have as many as 11 commissioners through merger and consolidation, so moving to seven is actually an example of smaller government working more effectively.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Ryan Spiller, Washington Fire Commissioner; Rick Kuss, East Pierce Fire & Rescue (PCFD 22).