

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5511

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Government Operations & Elections, February 26, 2007

Title: An act relating to requiring state agencies to allow volunteer firefighters to respond when called to duty.

Brief Description: Requiring state agencies to allow volunteer fire fighters to respond when called to duty.

Sponsors: Senators Sheldon, Kastama, Clements, Rasmussen and Shin.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 2/22/07, 2/26/07 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5511 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

Staff: Amy Van Horn (786-7784)

Background: The Director of the Department of Personnel determines when a state employee must be granted leave with pay, and when the employer has discretion whether or not to grant leave with pay. Employers have discretion over whether to grant leave with pay to state employees volunteering in firefighting, search and rescue efforts, and donating blood.

Private sector employers may not discharge or discipline a volunteer firefighter or reserve officer who has taken leave to respond to an alarm of fire or an emergency call.

Summary of Bill: An agency must allow an employee who is a volunteer firefighter to respond, without pay, to a fire or natural disaster when called to duty. The agency may choose to grant leave with pay.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY RECOMMENDED SUBSTITUTE AS PASSED COMMITTEE (Government Operations & Elections): An agency must allow a volunteer firefighter to respond to medical emergencies, in addition to fires and natural disasters, if called to duty.

Appropriation: None.

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.

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: This bill facilitates and encourages volunteer emergency response and responders. The most important factor in successful, safe emergency response is quick response time. Responders are part of a team that works best and safest when working together. That requires that a volunteer assume his or her post as quickly as possible. That means that responders must be able to leave whatever they are doing, such as their paying job, as fast as they safely can. This bill will help remove any unnecessary bureaucratic delay so that volunteer emergency responders who work for the state can get to their posts as fast as possible. The bill will make emergency response safer for the public and for the responders themselves. It will also encourage other people to volunteer as emergency responders, on whom the state relies heavily.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Sheldon, prime sponsor; Luis Moscoso, Washington Public Employees Association, United Food and Commercial Workers 365; Nadine Jardine, Department of Revenue, Mason County Fire District #9; David Byers, North Olympia Fire Department.