

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## HB 1264

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As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
Governmental Operations, February 27, 2014

**Title:** An act relating to partial fire district mergers.

**Brief Description:** Concerning partial fire district mergers.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Haigh, Chandler, Takko and Ryu.

**Brief History:** Passed House: 2/07/14, 94-0.

**Committee Activity:** Governmental Operations: 2/20/14, 2/27/14 [DP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Hasegawa, Ranking Member; Conway, Dandel, McCoy and Rivers.

**Staff:** Sam Thompson (786-7413)

**Background:** Fire protection districts (districts) are local government entities providing fire suppression and emergency medical services. There are over 350 active districts in the state. Districts may impose a property tax and benefit charges. Mergers are authorized. A merger involves a merging district, the district seeking to partly or entirely merge with another district; and a merger district, the district into which a merger is proposed. Mergers are initiated by petition of a merging district governing board or merging district voters. In either case, final approval by voters is generally required.

Petition by Board. A petition by a merging district board is filed with the merger district board. If the latter board approves, an election is called.

Petition by Voters. A petition by merging district voters is filed with the merging district board. If that board approves, the petition is presented to the merger district board. If that board approves, an election is called. However, if three-fifths of merging district voters in an area to be served petition for merger, the merger is effected without an election.

Disapproval by Either Board; Role of Boundary Review Board (BRB) or County Legislative Authority. If either board does not approve a petition, the petition may nonetheless be

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approved by a local county BRB or county legislative authority upon a finding that the area will be better served by a merger. An election is then called. BRBs review proposals to create local government entities or modify local government boundaries. BRB members are appointed by the Governor and local governments in a county.

District Name. Following a merger involving districts in multiple counties, a merger district is renamed to bear the name of each county in which the merger district is located and a number.

**Summary of Bill:** Role of BRB or County Legislative Authority. The authority of a BRB or county legislative authority to approve a petition for partial merger of districts when either district board does not approve the petition is deleted. If either board does not approve the petition, the partial merger must not proceed.

Petition by Voters. If three-fifths of merging district voters in an area to be served petition for a partial merger, the merger is effected without an election only if the merger is approved by the merging district board and merger district board.

District Name. Partial mergers involving districts in multiple counties are exempt from the requirement that a merger district be renamed following the merger.

**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: Some proposed mergers may cause management difficulties for districts. This legislation appropriately grants district governing boards authority to approve or disapprove proposed mergers. The provision regarding changes in district names will save districts from expenses relating to name changes on signs, equipment, and stationery.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Ryan Spiller, WA Fire Commissioners Assn.