

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1313

As Reported by House Committee On:
Local Government

Title: An act relating to granting fire protection districts and regional fire protection service authorities biennial budget authority.

Brief Description: Granting fire protection districts and regional fire protection service authorities biennial budget authority.

Sponsors: Representatives Zeiger, Fey, Stambaugh, Takko, Van De Wege, Stokesbary, Griffey and Reykdal.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Local Government: 1/28/15, 2/5/15 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Authorizes fire protection districts and regional fire protection authorities to adopt biennial budgets with mid-biennium reviews and modifications for the second year of the biennium.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Takko, Chair; Gregerson, Vice Chair; Taylor, Ranking Minority Member; Griffey, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Fitzgibbon, McBride, McCaslin, Peterson and Pike.

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

Fire Protection Districts.

Fire protection districts (fire districts) are created to provide fire and emergency services to protect life and property in locations outside of cities and towns. A fire district may be established through a process involving a petition by the residents of a proposed district, a

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public hearing, and voter approval. Fire districts are governed by a board of three or five elected commissioners, and are authorized to impose property taxes, benefit charges, or both.

Each year, fire districts are obligated to prepare and certify district budgets, and to deliver the budgets to the applicable county legislative authority or authorities in ample time for the levying of fire district taxes.

Regional Fire Protection Service Authorities.

In 2004 the Legislature authorized the creation of regional fire protection service authorities (RFAs) as separate taxing districts charged with providing regional fire protection and emergency services within their jurisdictional boundaries. An RFA is formed when elected officials from two or more adjacent fire protection jurisdictions develop a plan for the creation, financing, and operation of an RFA that is subsequently approved by voters within the proposed RFA. The governing body of an RFA is determined by provisions in the plan calling for its creation. An RFA may impose property taxes, benefit charges, or both.

Provisions governing RFAs do not include mandates or authorizations related to the frequency with which budgets must or may be adopted.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

In lieu of adopting only annual budgets, fire districts and RFAs may adopt biennial budgets with mid-biennium reviews and modifications for the second year of the biennium.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill specifies that the authority of an RFA to adopt a biennial budget, as proposed in the underlying bill, may be exercised in lieu of adopting an annual budget.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill is a request from the Central Pierce County Fire and Rescue District. There are advantages to adopting biennial budgets rather than annual budgets. If fire districts and RFAs determine, as the Legislature has, that it is beneficial to adopt biennial budgets, they should have the option to do so.

Other entities, including cities, have the authority to adopt biennial rather than annual budgets. If adopted, this bill will create time savings and will allow commissioners to have longer range focuses, with annual evaluations of performance measures. A biennial budget process will save time and money, and will also prevent fire agencies from needing to publish budget books annually. Citizens will continue to have input in the budgeting process under this bill; this is a good option for fire districts to have.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Zeiger, prime sponsor; and Keith Wright, Central Pierce Fire and Rescue.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.