

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2732

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### As Reported by House Committee On: State Government

**Title:** An act relating to voter approval requirements for fire protection district annexations.

**Brief Description:** Modifying certain voter approval requirements for fire protection district annexations.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Peterson and Stokesbary.

#### **Brief History:**

##### **Committee Activity:**

State Government: 1/27/16, 1/28/16 [DP].

#### **Brief Summary of Bill**

- Removes voters residing within the boundaries of a fire protection district as qualified electors for the purpose of a special election to annex a city, partial city, or town into a fire protection district.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives S. Hunt, Chair; Bergquist, Vice Chair; Frame and Moscoso.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Holy, Ranking Minority Member; Van Werven, Assistant Ranking Minority Member.

**Minority Report:** Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Hawkins.

**Staff:** Dawn Eychaner (786-7135).

#### **Background:**

A fire protection district (FPD) is a municipal corporation with independent taxing authority. There are nearly 400 unincorporated FPDs in the state, with a combined total population of

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nearly 2 million residents. The FPDs are authorized to provide fire prevention and suppression services, emergency medical services, and to protect life and property.

The formation of a FPD may be initiated by a petition signed by at least 10 percent of the registered voters who reside within the proposed district boundaries and who voted in the last general municipal election. After a public hearing, the county legislative authority may approve or deny the petition. If the petition is approved, the county legislative authority determines the FPD boundaries and directs an election to be held on the formation of the district and election of initial fire commissioners. Voter approval of a FPD requires a three-fifths vote of the voters at the next general election conducted by the county.

Cities and towns adjacent to the boundaries of a FPD, and with 300,000 or fewer residents, may annex fully or partially to a FPD with the concurrence of the FPD commissioners and a majority vote of the voters in each jurisdiction through a special election. A portion of a city or town may be annexed when the city or town is located in two counties and at least 80 percent of the population resides in one county. In this case, the portion with 80 percent of the population may be annexed. For a portion of a city or town to be annexed to a FPD, the population of the proposed annexation area must be between 4,999 and 9,999 people.

When a city annexes to a FPD, a portion of the city's property tax authority is transferred to the FPD. Any future territory annexed by the city also becomes annexed to the FPD. Starting three years after annexation, a city or town has the option of withdrawing from the FPD. Withdrawal from a FPD requires the approval of the voters of the city, partial city, or town at the next general election.

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**Summary of Bill:**

A special election to annex a city, partial city, or town into a FPD is limited to electors residing in the respective city, partial city, or town. Voters residing within the boundaries of the FPD are removed as qualified electors for the special election and may not vote on the annexation measure.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date:** 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 would allow fire protection districts to provide more efficient services. Only the individuals in a city annexing into a fire district will have a vote. This is the same process currently followed when a portion of an unincorporated area annexes into a city. Fire

districts will save money if they do not have to send ballots and voting material to as many residents.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Peterson, prime sponsor; and Ed Widdis, Snohomish County Fire District 1.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.