

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2576

As Reported by House Committee On:
Local Government

Title: An act relating to allowing fire protection district annexations and mergers within a reasonable geographic proximity.

Brief Description: Allowing fire protection district annexations and mergers within a reasonable geographic proximity.

Sponsors: Representatives Griffey, Springer and McBride.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Local Government: 1/18/18, 1/23/18 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Provides that property located within a reasonable proximity to, rather than adjacent to, a fire district may be annexed by the fire district.
- Authorizes a fire protection jurisdiction that is located within a reasonable proximity to the boundary of a regional fire district authority to be eligible for annexation by the authority, rather than adjacent to the authority.
- Permits two or more fire protection jurisdictions located within reasonable proximity to each other (rather than adjacent to each other) to form a regional fire service authority.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Appleton, Chair; McBride, Vice Chair; Griffey, Ranking Minority Member; Pike, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Gregerson and Peterson.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Taylor.

Staff: Yvonne Walker (786-7841).

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.

Background:

Fire Protection Districts.

A fire protection district (district) is a type of special purpose district created to provide fire prevention, fire suppression, and emergency medical services within a district's boundaries, which can include incorporated and unincorporated areas. Generally, districts serve residents outside of cities or towns, except when cities and towns have been annexed into a district or when the district continues to provide service to a newly incorporated area. The districts finance their activities and facilities by imposing regular property taxes, excess voter-approved property tax levies, and benefit charges.

Annexation to a Fire Protection District.

A city or town may annex to a district provided it is located within a reasonable proximity to that district. A district may also merge with another district if it is located within a reasonable proximity to that district. There are various methods for annexations such as:

- *Unincorporated Area/Election Method.* For property adjacent to the district and not within the boundaries of any city, town or other district, an annexation process may commence with a petition to the district signed by 15 percent of the qualified registered voters residing within the territory proposed for annexation. If the fire protection district commissioners concur, the petition is submitted to the county legislative authority or boundary review board and, if approved, to the voters of territory proposed for annexation at a special election.
- *Unincorporated Area/Petition Method.* Alternatively, property adjacent to the district may be annexed by the district upon petition signed by owners of at least 60 percent of the land proposed for annexation. The fire protection district commissioners may accept the petition and hold a public hearing on the petition. The district may adopt a resolution to annex all or a portion of the proposed annexation property, and the district's action is subject to review by the county legislative authority or boundary review board.

Regional Fire Protection Service Authorities.

Regional fire protection services authorities (RFAs) are municipal corporations created to conduct selected fire protection functions at a regional level. Regional fire protection services authorities are formed by transferring the powers, duties, and functions of two or more adjacent fire protection jurisdictions to a RFA in accordance with a RFA plan approved by voters.

Definitions.

"Regional fire protection service authority" means a municipal corporation, an independent taxing authority, and a taxing district, whose boundaries are coextensive with two or more adjacent fire protection jurisdictions and that has been created by a vote of the people to implement a regional fire protection service authority plan.

"Reasonable proximity" means geographical areas near enough to each other so that governance, management, and services can be delivered effectively.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Annexation to a Fire Protection District.

Under the petition method of annexation for a district, property located within a reasonable proximity to (rather than adjacent to) a fire district may be annexed by the district.

Regional Fire Protection Service Authorities.

A fire protection jurisdiction that is located within a reasonable proximity to the boundary of a RFA (rather than adjacent to a RFA) is eligible for annexation by the authority. In addition, two or more fire protection jurisdictions located within reasonable proximity to each other (rather than adjacent to each other) may form a RFA.

Definitions.

A "regional fire protection service authority" is redefined to mean a municipal corporation, an independent taxing authority, and a taxing district, whose boundaries are coextensive with two or more fire protection jurisdictions located within reasonable proximity (rather than whose boundaries are coextensive with two or more adjacent districts) and that has been created by a vote of the people to implement a regional fire protection service authority plan.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The technical amendment changes the terms "adjacent to" to the terms of "within reasonable proximity" in other statutory provisions relating to fire districts.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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 is a cleanup bill to a lot of work that the Legislature did last year. Last year there was a bill that changed the terms "adjacent to" to within a "reasonable proximity." This makes it easier for fire districts to merge and annex districts and land when it makes sense. This is a technical correction bill to catch some statutory citations that were left out of last year's enacted bill.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Griffey, prime sponsor; and Ryan Spiller, Washington Fire Commissioners.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.