

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6575

As of January 30, 2018

Title: An act relating to protected lands not being assessed local fire district levies.

Brief Description: Concerning protected lands not being assessed local fire district levies.

Sponsors: Senators Rolfes and Van De Wege.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks: 1/29/18.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes a process for local fire districts to annex areas that receive protection, but do not pay a local fire district levy by January 1, 2020.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER, NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Staff: Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

Background: Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) Study. In September 2017, JLARC completed a study analyzing various aspects of fire protection assessments administered by the Department of Natural Resources. The report reviewed how DNR and counties collect the state protection assessments, as well as how DNR and local fire districts define their fire protection areas. Among other findings, JLARC:

- estimated that more than 20,000 parcels exist that do not pay either the state fire protection assessment or a local fire district levy, but likely receive fire protection services from DNR or a local fire district; and
- could not specifically determine which parcels would be subject to the state fire assessment, a local fire district levy, or both.

Firefighting Services on Unprotected Lands. Under current law, fire protection agencies are not required to provide firefighting services to unprotected land, which is defined as improved property located outside the jurisdiction of a fire protection service agency. Property owners of unprotected lands are encouraged to form or annex into a fire protection jurisdiction or enter into a contract for firefighting services. If this does not occur and

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firefighting services are provided to unprotected land, the property owners must reimburse the agency initiating firefighting services on unprotected land for certain costs incurred.

Summary of Bill: County assessors must submit a list of any parcel or parcels in their county that are under protection of a local fire district, but are not presently being assessed a local fire district levy. By resolution, the county legislative authority must approve the annexation of any parcels of land submitted by the assessor into a local fire district. Annexations must be completed by January 1, 2020.

The bill includes legislative findings and defines terms.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 27, 2018.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: There are islands of developed areas within fire districts that were left out because they used to be forested and pay the DNR assessment. While they would receive protection, they do not pay the fire district assessment. This bill sets up a process to clean this situation up since everyone should pay their fair share. This is also a great way to support an initial attack on fires.

OTHER: The bill's concept is appreciated, but there are some gaps in the process it lays out and there is more discussion needed on implementation.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Christine Rolfes, Prime Sponsor; Scott Weninger, Fire Chief, Central Kitsap Fire and Rescue; Michael White, Legislative Liaison, Washington State Council of Fire Fighters.

OTHER: Monty Cobb, Washington Association of County Officials/County Assessors.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.