

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6415

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As of January 21, 2020

**Title:** An act relating to allowing a permanent fire protection district benefit charge with voter approval.

**Brief Description:** Allowing a permanent fire protection district benefit charge with voter approval.

**Sponsors:** Senators Das, Van De Wege, Wellman, Takko, Wilson, C., Hunt and Billig.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Local Government: 1/21/20.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Authorizes a fire protection district to impose a permanent benefit charge with voter approval.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

**Staff:** Greg Vogel (786-7413)

**Background:** Fire Districts. A fire protection district is a type of special purpose district created to provide fire prevention, fire suppression, and emergency medical services within a district's boundaries. 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.

Fire District Benefit Charges. A fire protection district may impose benefit charges on property within the district to finance its activities. Benefit charges may be imposed for a period up to six years if voters of the fire protection district approve a ballot proposition authorizing imposition of these benefit charges by at least a 60 percent majority vote.

A fire protection district may continue to impose benefit charges for another period up to six years, if approved by a simple majority vote. A district loses the authority to impose the third \$0.50 property tax levy if it imposes benefit charges, and the benefit charge may not generate more than 60 percent of the district's operating budget.

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*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.*

**Summary of Bill:** A fire protection district is authorized to impose a permanent benefit charge, when seeking authorization for the continued imposition of a benefit charge, with approval by a majority of the voters of the district.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**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: Fire districts are seeking consistent and stable funding to serve the public. The cost of elections for these reauthorizations can be quite expensive and districts believe this money would be better spent on fire and EMS services. This bill creates budget certainty and allows for long range planning.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Mona Das, Prime Sponsor; Bud Sizemore, WSCFF; Dylan Doty, Washington Fire Chiefs.

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