

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5925

As Passed Senate, February 7, 2024

Title: An act relating to fire protection district commissioner per diem compensation.

Brief Description: Concerning fire protection district commissioner per diem compensation.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Local Government, Land Use & Tribal Affairs (originally sponsored by Senators Torres, Lovelett, Short and Van De Wege).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Local Government, Land Use & Tribal Affairs: 1/09/24, 1/25/24 [DPS].

Floor Activity: Passed Senate: 2/7/24, 48-0.

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Allows a commissioner of a fire protection district which has an operating budget of \$10 million or more to receive not more than 144 per diem payments at the per diem rate specified by the Office of Financial Management, adjusted for inflation.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT, LAND USE & TRIBAL AFFAIRS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5925 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Lovelett, Chair; Salomon, Vice Chair; Torres, Ranking Member; Kauffman and Short.

Staff: Karen Epps (786-7424)

Background: Fire Protection Districts. Fire Protection Districts (Districts) are created to

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

provide fire prevention, fire suppression, and emergency services within a district's boundaries. A District may be established through voter approval. A District has the powers and authorities of a municipal corporation. A District may be financed by imposing regular property taxes, excess voter-approved property tax levies, and benefit charges. A District is governed by a board of commissioners composed of three, five, or seven members who are registered voters residing in the district.

Each commissioner may receive up to \$104 per day in compensation, or a portion of that amount, for time spent at official board meetings or performing duties on behalf of the district. The total compensation for each commissioner may not exceed \$9,984 each year. Each commissioner may receive reimbursement for expenses incurred while engaged in district business. The dollar thresholds must be adjusted for inflation by the Office of Financial Management every five years, beginning January 1, 2019, based upon changes in the consumer price index during that time period. Beginning January 1, 2024, payment of compensation for each member of the board is set at a rate of \$161 per day, with compensation for each commissioner not to exceed \$15,456 per year.

Summary of First Substitute Bill: A commissioner of a district which has an operating budget of \$10 million or more may receive not more than 144 per diem payments at the per diem rate specified by the Office of Financial Management, adjusted for inflation..

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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 on Original Bill: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: This bill will allow the largest fire districts to increase the number of paid per diem days to 144 per year. This bill would apply to approximately 20 of the nearly 400 districts in the state. These districts are as large and as complex as some cities and the non-salaried, elected commissioners are asked to do more. Fire districts have annexed more area, merged, consolidated, or created regional fire authorities, which means more work for commissioners. Commissioners attend regular board meetings, staff meetings, trainings, and meetings with the chief, as well as serve on other boards as representatives. Many commissioners run out of per diem days in July or August. Dealing with multi-million-dollar organizations takes time for the commissioners. Commissioners are often employees and, to do this work, they are taking time off from their current job.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Nikki Torres, Prime Sponsor; Matthew Holm; ryan spiller, Wa fire commissioners; Robert Homan, Graham Fire & Rescue.

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