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**HOUSE BILL 2576**

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**State of Washington 65th Legislature 2018 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Griffey, Springer, and McBride

AN ACT Relating to allowing fire protection district annexations and mergers within a reasonable geographic proximity; and amending RCW 52.04.031, 52.26.020, 52.26.060, and 52.26.300.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

**Sec.**  RCW 52.04.031 and 1999 c 105 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

A petition for annexation of an area ((~~adjacent~~)) located within reasonable proximity to a fire district shall be in writing, addressed to and filed with the board of fire commissioners of the district to which annexation is desired. Such territory may be located in a county or counties other than the county or counties within which the fire protection district is located. It must be signed by the owners, according to the records of the county auditor or auditors, of not less than sixty percent of the area of land included in the annexation petition, shall set forth a legal description of the property and shall be accompanied by a plat which outlines the boundaries of the property to be annexed. The petition shall state the financial obligation, if any, to be assumed by the area to be annexed.

For the purposes of this section, "reasonable proximity" has the same meaning as in RCW 52.26.020.

**Sec.**  RCW 52.26.020 and 2017 c 196 s 7 are each amended to read as follows:

The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Board" means the governing body of a regional fire protection service authority.

(2) "Elected official" means an elected official of a participating fire protection jurisdiction or a regional fire protection district commissioner created under RCW 52.26.080.

(3) "Fire protection jurisdiction" means a fire district, regional fire protection service authority, city, town, port district, municipal airport, or Indian tribe.

(4) "Participating fire protection jurisdiction" means a fire protection jurisdiction participating in the formation or operation of a regional fire protection service authority.

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

(6) "Regional fire protection service authority" or "authority" means a municipal corporation, an independent taxing authority within the meaning of Article VII, section 1 of the state Constitution, and a taxing district within the meaning of Article VII, section 2 of the state Constitution, whose boundaries are coextensive with two or more ((~~adjacent~~)) fire protection jurisdictions located within reasonable proximity and that has been created by a vote of the people under this chapter to implement a regional fire protection service authority plan.

((~~(6)~~)) (7) "Regional fire protection service authority plan" or "plan" means a plan to develop and finance a regional fire protection service authority project or projects including, but not limited to, specific capital projects, fire operations and emergency service operations pursuant to RCW 52.26.040(3)(b), and preservation and maintenance of existing or future facilities.

((~~(7)~~)) (8) "Regional fire protection service authority planning committee" or "planning committee" means the advisory committee created under RCW 52.26.030 to create and propose to fire protection jurisdictions a regional fire protection service authority plan to design, finance, and develop fire protection and emergency service projects.

((~~(8)~~)) (9) "Regular property taxes" has the same meaning as in RCW 84.04.140.

**Sec.**  RCW 52.26.060 and 2006 c 200 s 4 are each amended to read as follows:

The governing bodies of two or more ((~~adjacent~~)) fire protection jurisdictions located within reasonable proximity, upon receipt of the regional fire protection service authority plan under RCW 52.26.040, may certify the plan to the ballot, including identification of the revenue options specified to fund the plan. The governing bodies of the fire protection jurisdictions may draft a ballot title, give notice as required by law for ballot measures, and perform other duties as required to put the plan before the voters of the proposed authority for their approval or rejection as a single ballot measure that both approves formation of the authority and approves the plan. Authorities may negotiate interlocal agreements necessary to implement the plan. The electorate is the voters voting within the boundaries of the proposed regional fire protection service authority. A simple majority of the total persons voting on the single ballot measure to approve the plan and establish the authority is required for approval. However, if the plan authorizes the authority to impose benefit charges or sixty percent voter approved taxes, then the percentage of total persons voting on the single ballot measure to approve the plan and establish the authority is the same as in RCW 52.26.050. The authority must act in accordance with the general election laws of the state. The authority is liable for its proportionate share of the costs when the elections are held under RCW 29A.04.321 and 29A.04.330.

**Sec.**  RCW 52.26.300 and 2011 c 271 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) A fire protection jurisdiction that is ((~~adjacent~~)) located within reasonable proximity to the boundary of a regional fire protection service authority is eligible for annexation by the authority.

(2) An annexation is initiated by the adoption of a resolution by the governing body of a fire protection jurisdiction requesting the annexation. The resolution requesting annexation must then be filed with the governing board of the authority that is requested to annex the fire protection jurisdiction.

(3) Except as otherwise provided in the regional fire protection service authority plan, on receipt of the resolution requesting annexation, the governing board of the authority may adopt a resolution amending its plan to establish terms and conditions of the requested annexation and submit the resolution and plan amendment to the fire protection jurisdiction requesting annexation. An election to authorize the annexation may be held only if the governing body of the fire protection jurisdiction seeking annexation adopts a resolution approving both the annexation and the related plan amendment.

(4)(a) An annexation is authorized if the voters in the fire protection jurisdiction proposed to be annexed approve by a simple majority vote a single ballot measure approving the annexation and related plan amendment.

(b) An annexation is effective on the date specified in the ballot measure. In the event the ballot measure does not specify an effective date, the effective date is on the subsequent January 1st or July 1st, whichever occurs first.

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