

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6285

As Reported By House Committee On:

Government Administration

Title: An act relating to benefit charges imposed by fire protection districts.

Brief Description: Revising provisions relating to imposition of benefit charges by fire protection districts.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Government Operations (originally sponsored by Senators Goings, McCaslin, Haugen, Winsley, Patterson and Rasmussen).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Government Administration: 2/18/98 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives D. Schmidt, Chairman; D. Sommers, Vice Chairman; Scott, Ranking Minority Member; Doumit; Dunn; Dunshee; Murray; L. Thomas; Wensman and Wolfe.

Staff: Steve Lundin (786-7127).

Background: Fire protection districts finance their activities and facilities by imposing regular property taxes, excess voter-approved property tax levies, and benefit charges. The authority to impose regular property taxes includes three separate levies of 50 cents per thousand dollars of assessed value, but the third regular property tax levy may only be imposed if the fire protection district has at least one full-time employee.

A fire protection district may impose benefit charges for up to six years on personal property and improvements to real property in the district if a ballot proposition authorizing the benefit charges is approved by a 60 percent majority vote of district voters voting on the proposition. Benefit charges must be reasonably proportioned to the measurable benefits to property resulting from the services provided by the district. If the benefit charge is imposed, a fire protection district may not impose the third 50 cents per thousand dollars of assessed value regular property tax levy. Benefit charges may not exceed 60 percent of the district's operating budget.

Language is provided in statute for the ballot proposition authorizing a fire protection district to impose benefit charges. This language inquires if the fire protection district shall be authorized "to impose" the benefit charges.

Summary of Bill: Benefit charges imposed by a fire protection district on any single property may be combined into a single charge if, on request, the fire protection district provides the property owner with an itemized list of different charges for each measurable benefit that are included within the single combined charge figure.

Separate language is provided in statute for a ballot proposition to re-authorize a fire protection district to impose benefit charges. This alternative language asks if the fire protection district shall be authorized "to continue" benefit charges.

The calculation of the 106 percent limitation on regular property tax levies for a fire protection district that stops imposing benefit charges includes an amount from the third 50 cents per thousand dollars of assessed value levy that district could have imposed but for the prohibition on a fire protection district imposing any of that levy if it imposes benefit charges.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: This cleans up these laws. No ballot language is provided in statute for voters to re-authorize benefit charges. A user group came up with these changes.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Goings, prime sponsor; Mike Pretz, Central Pierce Fire and Reserve; and Roger Ferris, Washington Fire Commissioners Association.