

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6451

As of February 3, 2016

Title: An act relating to voter approval requirements for fire protection district annexations.

Brief Description: Modifying certain voter approval requirements for fire protection district annexations.

Sponsors: Senators Roach, Chase and Liias.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Security: 2/01/16.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & SECURITY

Staff: Alex Kearns (786-7416)

Background: Fire Protection Districts. Fire protection districts (Districts) are municipal corporations created to provide fire and emergency services in locations outside of cities and towns. Districts are governed by a board of three, five, or seven elected fire commissioners and have the authority to impose property taxes and benefit charges. Districts are established through a petition filed with the county auditor. After a public hearing, the county authority may approve or deny the petition. If the petition is approved, the county legislative authority determines the District's boundaries and directs an election to be held on the formation of the district and election of initial fire commissioners. A three-fifths majority of votes approving the proposition at the next general election is required for formation.

Annexation. A city or town adjacent to a District may be annexed if the population is 300,000 or less. If a city or town is located in two counties, and at least 80 percent of the population resides in one county, the portion with 80 percent of the population may be annexed to a District. For a portion of a city or town to be annexed to a District the population of the proposed annexation area must be greater than 5000 but less than 10,000.

In order to be formally annexed, a city, partial city, or town must adopt an ordinance stating an intent to join the District, and the District's board of commissioners must approve of the annexation. Additionally, a special election must be called in which voters from the city, partial city, or town, and voters from the District are permitted to vote on the proposed annexation. A majority vote of approval is required for annexation.

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 special election to annex a city, partial city, or town into a District is limited to voters residing in the city, partial city, or town. Voters residing within the boundaries of the District are removed as qualified voters for the special election and may not vote on the annexation measure.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Currently, if a city annexes to a regional fire authority or if an unincorporated territory annexes to a city, only a majority vote of approval from the people in the area being annexed is needed. This bill would make it the same standard for fire protection districts, so that district members wouldn't have to vote and only the people within the city being annexed would. One major aspect to this is the cost. If there are 70,000 registered voters and a special election is held at the cost of five dollars a voter that's a \$400,000 cost.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Ed Widdis, Snohomish County Fire District 1.

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