

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1475

As Passed House:

February 23, 2007

Title: An act relating to the state board for volunteer firefighters and reserve officers.

Brief Description: Adding members to the state board for volunteer firefighters and reserve officers.

Sponsors: By Representatives Hurst, Haigh, Eickmeyer, Curtis, Alexander, Morrell, Crouse, Simpson, Roach and VanDeWege.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government & Tribal Affairs: 1/30/07, 2/2/07 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/23/07, 94-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Adds two members to the State Board for Volunteer Fire Fighters and Reserves Officers (Board).
- Allows the Governor to consider recommendations from appropriate state associations when making appointments to the Board.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL AFFAIRS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Hunt, Chair; Appleton, Vice Chair; Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; Armstrong, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Green, Kretz, McDermott, Miloscia and Ormsby.

Staff: Alison Hellberg (786-7152).

Background:

The Volunteer Fire Fighters' and Reserve Officers' Relief and Pension System (System) provides death, disability, medical, and retirement benefits to volunteer fire fighters and

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reserve officers in cities, towns, and fire protection districts. The System is funded by member and employer contributions and a portion of the fire insurance premium tax.

Employers are required to participate in the death, disability, and medical benefit plans offered by the System, but participation in the pension component is optional. Around 18,000 members are covered by the death, disability, and medical benefits, and 12,000 members are covered by the pension benefits.

The State Board for Volunteer Fire Fighters and Reserve Officers (Board) administers the System. The Board consists of three members of fire departments covered by the System and are appointed by the Governor to serve overlapping six-year terms. The members must be from different congressional districts.

Summary of Bill:

Two members are added to the Board for a total of five board members. No more than two of the members of the Board may be receiving relief or retirement pension payments under the system. The Governor may consider recommendations from appropriate state associations when making appointments to the Board.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Volunteer fire fighters are really the backbone of fire protection in Washington. Many legislative districts rely on volunteer fire fighters and this bill is an important recognition of the extraordinary work they do.

Many volunteer fire fighters do not feel like their voices are being heard by members of the Board. This is a problem because the goal of the Board is to represent volunteer fire fighters. Volunteer fire fighters are especially excited that the bill requires three of the members to be active volunteers. This bill was also introduced last year. The sponsors worked with the Governor's office to get the appropriate language.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Hurst, prime sponsor; Representative Curtis; and Tamara Warnke, Washington State Fire Fighters Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.