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**HB 1605** - H AMD **208**

By Representative Peterson

**WITHDRAWN 03/10/2015**

 On page 6, after line 6, insert the following:

"**Sec.**  RCW 52.18.010 and 1998 c 16 s 1 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The board of fire commissioners of a fire protection district may by resolution, for fire protection district purposes authorized by law, fix and impose a benefit charge on personal property and improvements to real property which are located within the fire protection district on the date specified and which have or will receive the benefits provided by the fire protection district, to be paid by the owners of the properties: PROVIDED, That a benefit charge shall not apply to personal property and improvements to real property owned or used by any recognized religious denomination or religious organization as, or including, a sanctuary or for purposes related to the bona fide religious ministries of the denomination or religious organization, including schools and educational facilities used for kindergarten, primary, or secondary educational purposes or for institutions of higher education and all grounds and buildings related thereto, but not including personal property and improvements to real property owned or used by any recognized religious denomination or religious organization for business operations, profit-making enterprises, or activities not including use of a sanctuary or related to kindergarten, primary, or secondary educational purposes or for institutions of higher education. Except as provided otherwise in subsection (4) of this section, a benefit charge also does not apply to personal property and improvements to real property used for low-income housing that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 35.82.210 or 84.36.560. The aggregate amount of such benefit charges in any one year shall not exceed an amount equal to sixty percent of the operating budget for the year in which the benefit charge is to be collected: PROVIDED, That it shall be the duty of the county legislative authority or authorities of the county or counties in which the fire protection district is located to make any necessary adjustments to assure compliance with such limitation and to immediately notify the board of fire commissioners of any changes thereof.

(2) A benefit charge imposed shall be reasonably proportioned to the measurable benefits to property resulting from the services afforded by the district. It is acceptable to apportion the benefit charge to the values of the properties as found by the county assessor or assessors modified generally in the proportion that fire insurance rates are reduced or entitled to be reduced as the result of providing the services. Any other method that reasonably apportions the benefit charges to the actual benefits resulting from the degree of protection, which may include but is not limited to the distance from regularly maintained fire protection equipment, the level of fire prevention services provided to the properties, or the need of the properties for specialized services, may be specified in the resolution and shall be subject to contest on the ground of unreasonable or capricious action or action in excess of the measurable benefits to the property resulting from services afforded by the district. The board of fire commissioners may determine that certain properties or types or classes of properties are not receiving measurable benefits based on criteria they establish by resolution. A benefit charge authorized by this chapter shall not be applicable to the personal property or improvements to real property of any individual, corporation, partnership, firm, organization, or association maintaining a fire department and whose fire protection and training system has been accepted by a fire insurance underwriter maintaining a fire protection engineering and inspection service authorized by the state insurance commissioner to do business in this state, but such property may be protected by the fire protection district under a contractual agreement.

(3) For administrative purposes, the benefit charge imposed on any individual property may be compiled into a single charge, provided that the district, upon request of the property owner, provide an itemized list of charges for each measurable benefit included in the charge.

 (4) The prohibition in subsection (1) of this section on the application of benefit charges to certain personal property and improvements to real property used for low-income housing does not apply to districts that imposed benefit charges on such personal property and improvements to real property on or before the effective date of this act.

**Sec.**  RCW 52.26.180 and 2004 c 129 s 24 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The governing board of a regional fire protection service authority may by resolution, as authorized in the plan and approved by the voters, for authority purposes authorized by law, fix and impose a benefit charge on personal property and improvements to real property which are located within the authority on the date specified and which have received or will receive the benefits provided by the authority, to be paid by the owners of the properties. A benefit charge does not apply to personal property and improvements to real property owned or used by any recognized religious denomination or religious organization as, or including, a sanctuary or for purposes related to the bona fide religious ministries of the denomination or religious organization, including schools and educational facilities used for kindergarten, primary, or secondary educational purposes or for institutions of higher education and all grounds and buildings related thereto. However, a benefit charge does apply to personal property and improvements to real property owned or used by any recognized religious denomination or religious organization for business operations, profit-making enterprises, or activities not including use of a sanctuary or related to kindergarten, primary, or secondary educational purposes or for institutions of higher education. Except as provided otherwise in subsection (5) of this section, a benefit charge also does not apply to personal property and improvements to real property used for low-income housing that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 35.82.210 or 84.36.560. The aggregate amount of these benefit charges in any one year may not exceed an amount equal to sixty percent of the operating budget for the year in which the benefit charge is to be collected. It is the duty of the county legislative authority or authorities of the county or counties in which the regional fire protection service authority is located to make any necessary adjustments to assure compliance with this limitation and to immediately notify the governing board of an authority of any changes thereof.

(2) A benefit charge imposed must be reasonably proportioned to the measurable benefits to property resulting from the services afforded by the authority. It is acceptable to apportion the benefit charge to the values of the properties as found by the county assessor or assessors modified generally in the proportion that fire insurance rates are reduced or entitled to be reduced as the result of providing the services. Any other method that reasonably apportions the benefit charges to the actual benefits resulting from the degree of protection, which may include but is not limited to the distance from regularly maintained fire protection equipment, the level of fire prevention services provided to the properties, or the need of the properties for specialized services, may be specified in the resolution and is subject to contest on the grounds of unreasonable or capricious action or action in excess of the measurable benefits to the property resulting from services afforded by the authority. The governing board of an authority may determine that certain properties or types or classes of properties are not receiving measurable benefits based on criteria they establish by resolution. A benefit charge authorized by this chapter is not applicable to the personal property or improvements to real property of any individual, corporation, partnership, firm, organization, or association maintaining a fire department and whose fire protection and training system has been accepted by a fire insurance underwriter maintaining a fire protection engineering and inspection service authorized by the state insurance commissioner to do business in this state, but the property may be protected by the authority under a contractual agreement.

(3) For administrative purposes, the benefit charge imposed on any individual property may be compiled into a single charge, provided that the authority, upon request of the property owner, provide an itemized list of charges for each measurable benefit included in the charge.

(4) For the purposes of this section and RCW 52.26.190 through 52.26.270, the following definitions apply:

(a)(i) "Personal property" includes every form of tangible personal property including, but not limited to, all goods, chattels, stock in trade, estates, or crops.

(ii) "Personal property" does not include any personal property used for farming, field crops, farm equipment, or livestock.

(b) "Improvements to real property" does not include permanent growing crops, field improvements installed for the purpose of aiding the growth of permanent crops, or other field improvements normally not subject to damage by fire.

(5) The prohibition in subsection (1) of this section on the application of benefit charges to certain personal property and improvements to real property used for low-income housing does not apply to authorities that imposed benefit charges on such personal property and improvements to real property on or before the effective date of this act.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  Except as expressly provided otherwise, nothing in sections 5 and 6 of this act is intended to modify or otherwise affect exemptions to benefit charges of fire protection districts and regional fire protection service authorities established in RCW 52.18.010 and 52.26.180 prior to the effective date of this act."

Correct the title.

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|  |  EFFECT:  (1) Prohibits fire protection districts (fire districts) and regional fire protection service authorities (RFAs) from applying voter-approved benefit charges to: (a) certain real and personal property owned or used by a nonprofit entity to provide rental housing for very low-income households or used to provide space for the placement of a mobile home for a very low-income household within a mobile home park; and (b) property of housing authorities, including tribal housing authorities and intertribal housing authorities. (2) Specifies that the prohibition does not apply to benefit charges imposed by fire districts and RFAs on the otherwise exempted personal property and improvements to real property on or before July 26, 2015.  (3) Establishes intent language related to the benefit charge prohibitions and exemptions.  |

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