

HOUSE BILL REPORT

EHB 2228

As Passed House:
February 18, 2020

Title: An act relating to early deployment of state fire service resources.

Brief Description: Permitting early deployment of state fire service resources.

Sponsors: Representatives Springer, Dent, Ramos, Griffey, Ryu, Appleton, Leavitt, Ormsby, Wylie and Goodman.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Housing, Community Development & Veterans: 1/15/20, 1/17/20 [DP];
Appropriations: 2/6/20, 2/11/20 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/18/20, 98-0.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill

- Allows additional resources to be requested and sent in preparation of an emergency or when an emergency is predicted to exceed local capabilities.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & VETERANS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Ryu, Chair; Morgan, Vice Chair; Jenkin, Ranking Minority Member; Gildon, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Barkis, Frame, Johnson, J., Leavitt and Ramel.

Staff: Serena Dolly (786-7150).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 24 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Robinson, 1st Vice Chair; Bergquist, 2nd Vice Chair; Stokesbary, Ranking Minority Member; Caldier, Chopp, Cody, Dolan, Fitzgibbon, Hansen, Hudgins, Kilduff, Kraft, Macri, Pettigrew, Pollet, Ryu, Senn, Springer, Steele, Sullivan, Tarleton, Tharinger and Ybarra.

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.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Rude, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Corry, Dye, Hoff, Schmick and Sutherland.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Mosbrucker.

Staff: Yvonne Walker (786-7841).

Background:

During an emergency, a local jurisdiction may request a state mobilization when it needs assistance beyond the capabilities of local resources and mutual aid agreements.

"Mobilization" means that risk resources beyond those available through existing agreements will be requested and, when available, sent in response to an emergency or disaster situation that has exceeded the capabilities of available local resources. During a large scale emergency, mobilization includes the redistribution of regional or statewide risk resources to either direct emergency incident assignments or to assignments in communities where resources are needed.

"Risk resources" means those resources regularly provided by fire departments, fire districts, and regional fire protection authorities required to respond to incidents, including, but not limited to, wild land fires, landslides, earthquakes, floods, and contagious diseases.

The Chief of the Washington State Patrol (Chief) has the authority to mobilize jurisdictions under the Washington State Fire Services Mobilization Plan. The purpose of the mobilization plan is to provide a mechanism and process to quickly notify, assemble, and deploy fire service personnel and equipment to any local fire jurisdiction in Washington that has expended or will expend all available local and mutual aid resources in attempting to manage fires, disasters, or other events that jeopardize the ability of a jurisdiction to provide for the protection of life and property. The State Fire Marshal in the Washington State Patrol serves as the state fire resources coordinator when the state mobilization plan is mobilized.

Summary of Engrossed Bill:

All risk resources may be requested and sent in preparation of an emergency or when an emergency is predicted to exceed local capabilities.

When the Chief receives a request for a pre-deployment mobilization of risk resources to an emergency or disaster based on a wildland fire, the Chief must consider both the available public risk resources as well as the resources available through the list of qualified wildland fire suppression contractors maintained by the Department of Natural Resources. The Chief must retain and deploy the resources that will provide the most effective and expeditious response.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Housing, Community Development & Veterans):

(In support) Washington's mobilization plan is one of the most used in the country, but it has a flaw that requires local resources to be exhausted before help can be deployed. Local governments are on the front lines of emergency response and have limited resources. This bill would allow mobilization to occur before local resources are overwhelmed. This bill is mostly applicable to wildfires because other emergencies, such as earthquakes, are not predictable, but we know when and where wildfires are likely to occur. The best time to fight a fire is when it starts, not three or four days later. There is a cost to position equipment, but contingency costs are built into the state budget. This bill would prevent additional costs and damage and save money in the long run.

(Opposed) None.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Appropriations):

(In support) Today we are much better at predicting when an emergency will take place as compared to years ago. Currently, all mobilizations are handled through the state mobilization plan. Usually such mobilizations are only used for wildland fires when such emergencies become costly to local jurisdictions. Allowing for early deployment of mobilizations will allow firefighters to arrive at the scene early on while the fire is still manageable, thus requiring less resources. Local governments have limited resources, and providing resources on the front end, before a situation gets worse, can help communities financially on the back end.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying (Housing, Community Development & Veterans): Representative Springer, prime sponsor; Juliana Roe, Washington State Association of Counties; and Steve North, Washington Fire Chiefs.

Persons Testifying (Appropriations): Representative Springer, prime sponsor; Juliana Roe, Washington State Association of Counties; Steve Wright, South Kitsap Fire and Rescue and Washington Fire Chiefs; and Dave LaFave, Cowlitz 2 Fire and Rescue.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Housing, Community Development & Veterans): None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Appropriations): None.