

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESB 6087

As Passed Senate, February 13, 2024

Title: An act relating to the fire service training account.

Brief Description: Concerning the fire service training account.

Sponsors: Senators King, Lovick and Mullet; by request of Washington State Patrol.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Ways & Means: 1/15/24, 2/05/24 [DP].

Floor Activity: Passed Senate: 2/13/24, 49-0.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill

- Increases the share of fire insurance premium moneys dedicated to the Fire Service Training Account from 20 percent to 22 percent.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Robinson, Chair; Mullet, Vice Chair, Capital; Nguyen, Vice Chair, Operating; Wilson, L., Ranking Member, Operating; Gildon, Assistant Ranking Member, Operating; Schoesler, Ranking Member, Capital; Warnick, Assistant Ranking Member, Capital; Billig, Boehnke, Braun, Conway, Dhingra, Hasegawa, Hunt, Keiser, Muzzall, Pedersen, Randall, Saldaña, Torres, Van De Wege, Wagoner and Wellman.

Staff:

Background: The Washington State Patrol (WSP) has authority for: (1) patrolling Washington State highways; (2) providing security for the Governor; (3) operating the Washington State Crime Lab and the Investigative Services Bureau; and (4) appointing the State Fire Marshal.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The State Fire Marshal is responsible for providing fire and life safety inspections in licensed care occupancies including nursing homes, boarding homes, group homes, hospitals, and childcare centers. The State Fire Marshal also may conduct construction plan review on new school construction and when local jurisdictions request assistance. It licenses the fireworks and the fire sprinkler industries and certifies fire sprinkler industry workers and cigarette manufacturers; trains Washington's fire service in the field and at the Washington State Fire Training Academy (Academy); and coordinates fire service resources during large fires and disasters through the state's Fire Resource Mobilization Plan.

The Academy is located in North Bend, Washington. The Academy provides training for firefighters and public safety officials as well as private brigades and the maritime industry. The Academy also provides training for hazardous spill cleanup. The facility is comprised of an administrative building, three classrooms, dormitories, and support facilities.

The Fire Service Training Account (Account) resides in the state treasury with the primary purpose of firefighter training for both volunteer and career firefighter service training, school fire prevention activities within the WSP, and the operations, maintenance, and capital projects of the Academy. Moneys in the Account may only be spent after appropriation. The Account consists of: (1) fees received by the WSP for fire service training; (2) all grants and bequests accepted by the WSP; (3) 20 percent of all moneys received by the state on fire insurance premiums; (4) revenue from penalties associated with certain building code violations; and (5) State General Fund moneys appropriated into the Account by the Legislature.

The Fire Insurance Premium Tax is currently collected as a 2 percent tax on premiums collected by insurers. The tax is currently distributed as follows:

- 40 percent—Volunteer Fire Fighters' Pension Fund;
- 25 percent—Firefighters' Pension Fund;
- 20 percent—Fire Service Training Account; and
- 15 percent—State General Fund.

Summary of Engrossed Bill: The share of fire insurance premium moneys dedicated to the Account is increased from 20 percent to 22 percent.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The account has seen a decline in funds, negatively impacting the strength of training. Funding this bill will allow the state fire marshal to expand training across the state, specific to community needs. In the last eight years, revenues into the Fire Service Training Account have only increased a few percent, not commensurate with the changing costs of training. The State Fire Marshal's Office has been underfunded for decades, with 97 percent of its funds requested failing to receive funding.

Persons Testifying: PRO: State Fire Marshal, Chad Cross, Washington State Patrol; Jeff Faucett, Washington Fire Chiefs; TJ Nedrow, WA St Fire Fighters' Association (Volunteers).

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