

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5511

As Reported by House Committee On:
State Government & Tribal Affairs

Title: An act relating to requiring state agencies to allow volunteer firefighters to respond when called to duty.

Brief Description: Requiring state agencies to allow volunteer firefighters to respond when called to duty.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Government Operations & Elections (originally sponsored by Senators Sheldon, Kastama, Clements, Rasmussen and Shin).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government & Tribal Affairs: 3/28/07 [DP].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires agencies to allow employees who are volunteer firefighters to respond to a fire, natural disaster, or medical emergency when called to duty.

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: Colleen Kerr (786-7168).

Background:

The Director of the Department of Personnel determines when a state employee must be granted leave with pay, and when the agency has discretion whether to grant leave with pay. Employers have discretion over whether to grant leave with pay to state employees volunteering in firefighting, search and rescue efforts, and donating blood.

Private sector employers may not discharge or discipline a volunteer firefighter or reserve officer who has taken leave to respond to an alarm of fire or an emergency call.

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:

An agency must allow an employee who is a volunteer firefighter to respond, without pay, to a fire, natural disaster, or medical emergency when called to duty. The agency may choose to grant leave with pay.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 27, 2007.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) It is currently discretionary for state agencies to decide whether to release employee volunteer firefighters when they are called to respond. The state is required to release members of the National Guard when they are called to duty, the state should also be required to do so for volunteer firefighters.

Every responder is trained as part of a team. Allowing them to report together when called to respond is in an important safety measure.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Sheldon, prime sponsor; Nadine Jardine, Mason County Fire District 9; Luis Moscoso, Washington Public Employee Association; and Tamara Warnke, Washington State Fire Fighters Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.