

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 1863

As Passed House:
March 6, 2017

Title: An act relating to the national fire incident reporting system.

Brief Description: Concerning the national fire incident reporting system.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Gregerson, Stokesbary, Appleton and Stambaugh).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Local Government: 2/7/17, 2/15/17 [DP];
Appropriations: 2/22/17 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/6/17, 98-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Chief of the Washington State Patrol, through the Director of Fire Protection, to administer the National Fire Incident Reporting System, subject to available appropriations.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Appleton, Chair; McBride, Vice Chair; Griffey, Ranking Minority Member; Pike, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Gregerson, Peterson and Taylor.

Staff: Desiree Omlı (786-7383)

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 33 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Robinson, Vice Chair; Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; MacEwen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Stokesbary, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Buys, Caldier, Cody, Condotta, Fitzgibbon,

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Haler, Hansen, Harris, Hudgins, Jinkins, Kagi, Lytton, Manweller, Nealey, Pettigrew, Pollet, Sawyer, Schmick, Senn, Springer, Stanford, Sullivan, Taylor, Tharinger, Vick, Volz and Wilcox.

Staff: Meghan Morris (786-7119).

Background:

National Fire Incident Reporting System.

The National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) is a standard reporting system developed by the United States Fire Administration that fire departments use to report on their activities. The NFIRS serves as a database to collect uniform fire incident information. After a fire department responds to an incident, they submit information through the NFIRS database pertaining to the nature of the call, the actions firefighters took in response to the call, and the outcome, including firefighter and civilian casualties and property loss estimates. The fire department then forwards this information to the state agency responsible for collecting the NFIRS data, which then reports the data to the United States Fire Administration. The Chief of the Washington State Patrol (WSP), through the Director of Fire Protection (Director), operated the NFIRS until the program was eliminated due to budget constraints.

Fire Reporting.

The chief of each fire department, or the sheriff or other designated county official having jurisdiction over areas not within the jurisdiction of any fire department, is required to report statistical information and data on each fire occurring within their jurisdiction to the Chief of the WSP, through the Director. Fire departments must report any deaths resulting from a fire within two business days. The reports must be consistent with the NFIRS and the rules established by the WSP, through the Director. The Director must analyze the information and data reported, compile a report, and distribute the report annually to each chief fire official by July 1.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Subject to the availability of funds appropriated for this purpose, the WSP, through the Director, must administer the NFIRS, or the state equivalent as selected by the Director. The Director's administration of the NFIRS may include:

- purchasing equipment to operate the program, including software;
- establishing procedures, standards, and guidelines pertaining to the statistical information and data reported by fire departments through the NFIRS;
- providing training and education to fire departments pertaining to the NFIRS; and
- employing staff, as needed, to administer the NFIRS.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Local Government):

(In support) In 2010 there were gubernatorial budget cuts that made it difficult to keep up with the technology needed to administer the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) and led to the fire marshals cutting the program. The last report was published in 2010 which reported that, in 2010, fire killed 67 Washingtonians, there was more than \$215 million in property loss, there were more than 20,000 fire incidents, more than 615,000 total incidents, more than 443,000 rescue and emergency medical incidents, and 575 firework injuries. There are details in annual reports pertaining to the fire and emergency problems that exist in Washington, but today, no one knows how many fires occur in the state, how many people are killed or injured, or whether there are trends.

When NFIRS was cut from the State Fire Marshal's budget, the Washington Fire Chiefs volunteered to be a receptacle for this fire incident information. There was a one-time \$50,000 appropriation, but there was no further appropriation. Even though fire departments fill out the NFIRS forms and submit them currently, the Washington Fire Chiefs do not have the capacity to do anything with the data. Data without a purpose is just data. At its height there was 80-90 percent reporting from districts throughout the state. It then dropped to about 50 percent participation. Requiring fire marshals to operate the NFIRS again would ensure it can be run appropriately in order to make data-based decisions.

(Opposed) None.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Appropriations):

(In support) The National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) was a casualty of Governor Gregoire's across-the-board 6.3 percent budget cuts. The Legislature never voted to end the reporting system. The Washington Association of Fire Chiefs volunteered to manage the information, but without funding, the system became a clearinghouse for whoever wanted to voluntarily submit reports. Without consistency in the data, the reports do no good over time. This bill puts NFIRS back under the control of the State Fire Marshal, subject to appropriations. The data is important for federal grants and to compile data on the number of fire incidents, the type fire incidents, and incident-related deaths.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying (Local Government): Representative Gregerson, prime sponsor; Geoff Simpson, Washington State Council of Fire Fighters; and Dylan Doty, Washington Fire Chiefs.

Persons Testifying (Appropriations): Dylan Doty; and Michael White, Washington State Council of Fire Fighters.

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

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