

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1751

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Local Government, March 16, 2017

Title: An act relating to allowing fire protection district annexations and mergers within a reasonable geographic proximity and eliminating cross-county restrictions for annexations to a fire protection district.

Brief Description: Allowing fire protection district annexations and mergers within a reasonable geographic proximity and eliminating cross-county restrictions for annexations to a fire protection district.

Sponsors: House Committee on Local Government (originally sponsored by Representatives Farrell and Goodman).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/28/17, 84-14.

Committee Activity: Local Government: 3/09/17, 3/16/17 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Permits a city or town to annex to a fire protection district if it is located within a reasonable proximity to that fire protection district.
- Removes provisions allowing partial cities to annex to fire protection districts.
- Permits a fire protection district to merge with another fire protection district if it is located within a reasonable proximity to that district.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Short, Chair; Angel, Vice Chair; Takko, Ranking Minority Member; Palumbo and Sheldon.

Staff: Alex Fairfortune (786-7416)

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.

Background: Fire Protection Districts. Fire protection districts (districts) are municipal corporations created to provide fire and emergency services in locations outside of cities and towns. Districts are governed by a board of three, five, or seven elected fire commissioners.

Annexation. A district may annex an adjacent city or town if that city or town has a population of 300,000 or fewer. If a city or town is located in two counties and at least 80 percent of the population resides in one county, the portion with 80 percent of the population may annex to a district. In order to annex, that partial city must have a population between 5000 and 10,000 people and be adjacent to the district. Annexation requires a majority vote of approval from both city and district voters.

Merger. Adjacent districts may merge with each other. A merger may occur if three-fifths of electors residing in the merging district sign a petition to merge, or by a majority vote of approval by the merging district's electors.

Summary of Bill: A city or town may annex to a district if it is located within a reasonable proximity to that district, rather than adjacent. A partial city may no longer annex to a district. A district may merge with another district if it is located within a reasonable proximity to that district, rather than adjacent.

Reasonable proximity means geographical areas near enough to each other so that governance, management, and services can be delivered effectively.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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: This is a simple bill with a slight change to make it clearer what reasonable proximity means. There are over 330 fire districts in the state, and more than 200 of them serve less than 2000 people. This bill allows fire districts to join to create efficiencies, even if there is no shared border. There are two fire districts that have similar operations and could be merged, but they are separated by the City of Lacey so no merger is allowed.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Jessyn Farrell, Prime Sponsor; Warren Peterson, Thurston County Fire District 6, Fire Chief.

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