

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5946

As of January 19, 2024

Title: An act relating to establishing a fallen firefighter memorial.

Brief Description: Establishing a fallen firefighter memorial.

Sponsors: Senators Van De Wege, Braun, Billig, Boehnke, Conway, Dozier, Hunt, Kuderer, Lias, Lovelett, Mullet, Nobles, Rivers, Saldaña, Short, Stanford, Torres, Valdez, Wagoner and Wilson, L.; by request of Department of Natural Resources.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: State Government & Elections: 1/19/24.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes a fallen firefighter memorial on the capitol campus in Olympia.
- Creates the non-appropriated fallen firefighter memorial account for the deposit of funds, gifts, and grants to support the establishment and maintenance of the fallen firefighter memorial.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & ELECTIONS

Staff: Danielle Creech (786-7412)

Background: The Capitol Campus in Olympia is home to many memorials for various events and groups of people. These include the World War II Memorial, the Law Enforcement Memorial, the Prisoners of War/Missing in Action Memorial, the Medal of Honor Memorial, the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial, and the Korean War Memorial. The Legislature also authorized the creation of a Global War on Terrorism Memorial in 2022.

The U.S. Fire Administration tracks on-duty firefighter fatalities that occur in the United

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.

States. The data shows that since 1990, 46 firefighters have lost their life in the line of duty in the State of Washington. This includes firefighters who served the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Army Reserve, city fire departments, county fire departments, volunteer fire departments, and tribal fire departments.

Summary of Bill: A fallen firefighter memorial is established on the capitol campus grounds in Olympia to recognize the sacrifice of firefighters who have died in the line of duty. The design and construction must follow the major works requirements administered by the Department of Enterprise Services (DES). The state capitol committee must work with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) as well as statewide organizations representing firefighters to review the building of the memorial.

The fallen firefighter memorial account is created in the custody of the state treasurer. DNR may adopt rules governing the receipt and use of funds in the account. Expenditures from the account may only be used for the design, siting, permitting, construction, maintenance, dedication, continuation, or creation of educational materials related to the placement of the memorial on the capitol campus.

Only DNR, with recommendations from the Washington State firefighter memorial foundation, may authorize expenditures from the account. All receipts directed to the account from federal funds, gifts, or grants, foundations, or other sources must be deposited into the account. The commissioner of public lands and DNR may solicit and accept moneys from gifts, grants, or endowments for this purpose. DNR is authorized to partner with nonprofit groups or foundations, or another state agency if necessary, to ensure the memorial is utilized by the public and the firefighter community to recognize, remember, and honor the sacrifice of firefighters who have died in the line of duty.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 15, 2024.

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: Having a memorial here is important to the entire firefighting community. It has been often discussed and long desired. Each day, thousands of career and volunteer firefighters across the state serve their communities when emergencies occur. These brave individuals risk their lives to help those in need. It's important to have a place here to pay our respects and honor those in the Washington State fire service. Firefighting is not just a job but a calling and a path for those who dedicate their life to service. Everyone in the fire service knows a firefighter who paid the ultimate price. Through their memories we have learned and gotten better at what we do. We all are willing to answer any call at any time and the stress that comes along is something we all

deal with. Trauma seen on calls can cause serious mental health issues. The top three causes of line of duty deaths are not fire. They are cancer, heart disease, and suicide. When a line of duty death happens, they are replaced within hours and there is no time to grieve or process the loss. This will allow firefighters to remember our brothers and sisters for more than just a moment. This memorial ensures that those who have made the ultimate sacrifice are remembered. Although a definitive source of funds has not been established, there are ongoing discussions being held to identify possible funding sources that would mitigate the need for appropriation.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Kevin Van De Wege, Prime Sponsor; Jeff Faucett, Washington Fire Chiefs; Steve Brooks, Washington Fire Chiefs; Bud Sizemore, WSCFF; Patrick McElligott, IAFF Local 31- Tacoma Firefighters; Brian Considine, Department of Natural Resources; George Geissler, Department of Natural Resources.

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