

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5946

As of February 2, 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, 1/26/24 [DPS-WM].
Ways & Means: 2/02/24.

Brief Summary of First Substitute 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

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5946 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Hunt, Chair; Valdez, Vice Chair; Wilson, J., Ranking Member; Dozier, Fortunato, Hasegawa and Kuderer.

Staff: Danielle Creech (786-7412)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

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.

Staff: Wendy Brown (786-7359)

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 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 (First Substitute): 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.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY STATE GOVERNMENT & ELECTIONS COMMITTEE (First Substitute):

- Specifies procedures for DNR and DES to design, establish, and maintain the memorial consistent with the major works requirements for projects on the capitol campus.
- Mandates that DES is responsible for providing and funding routine maintenance of the memorial once it is completed. Establishes that DNR or any foundation or

nonprofit it contracts with is responsible for any non-routine maintenance of the memorial.

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 on Original Bill (State Government & Elections):

The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard. 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 (State Government & Elections): 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 (State Government & Elections): No one.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on First Substitute (Ways & Means): PRO: The concept for the bill was brought to the Department of Natural Resources because the department has fire fighters and also sits on the state capital committee. We would work with DES and our firefighter partners to be that state agency to make the memorial happen. Firefighting is not a job. It is a calling and path for those who dedicate their lives to service.

We need to remember that these are people who have answered the call when we needed them to protect our citizens, our communities, and our natural resources. This legislation allows Washington to create a memorial that pays tribute to the people who make the ultimate sacrifice in service.

This is a very long, overdue effort, as the entire fire service has desired a memorial for the past twenty years. We have worked closely with fire commissioners, fire chiefs, volunteer firefighter associations in order to bring this bill forward to create a solemn place on this campus for the families of those who have fallen in the line of duty. Memorials are an important part of our society. They remind us of our history. The names that are etched in stone are permanent reminders of the men and women who have given their lives. Currently we have no permanent memorial that honors the 278 Washington State firefighters who have died in the line of duty since 1891. Having the memorial tells those families that we care and that we will always remember. There is a cost, but we are all working together to make sure we have funding moving forward.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Jeff Faucett, Washington Fire Chiefs; Brian Considine, Department of Natural Resources; George Geissler, Department of Natural Resources; Pat Ellis, Washington State Fallen Firefighters Memorial Foundation; Bud Sizemore, WSCFF.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Ways & Means): No one.