HOUSE BILL REPORT
HB 2104

As Reported by House Committee On:
Agriculture & Natural Resources
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to aviation assurance funding in response to wildland fires.

Brief Description: Concerning aviation assurance funding in response to wildland fires.

Sponsors: Representatives Dent, Springer, Ryu, Engell, Low, Simmons, Richards, Barnard, Keaton, Reed, Dye, Reeves, Shavers, McClintock, Thai and Graham.

Brief History:
Committee Activity:
Agriculture & Natural Resources: 1/23/26, 2/3/26 [DP];
Appropriations: 2/7/26, 2/9/26 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Makes the Aviation Assurance Funding Program for local fire response permanent.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Reeves, Chair; Morgan, Vice Chair; Dent, Ranking Minority Member; Engell, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bernbaum, McClintock, Nance, Orcutt, Richards, Schmick and Springer.

Staff: Lily Smith (786-7175).

Background:

Engrossed Substitute House Bill 1498, enacted in 2023, created a program to provide state aviation resources to local fire departments in limited circumstances (Aviation Assurance

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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.

Funding Program). This legislation expires July 1, 2027.

The Aviation Assurance Funding Program requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to use suppression funding, subject to funding availability, to assist local fire departments with aerial response during initial attacks meeting certain parameters. Local fire departments must:

- have entered into a response agreement with the DNR;
- provide documentation of specific personnel training; and
- make direct requests to the appropriate coordination center.

Aviation assets used in the initial attack must come from a list of private contractors approved by the DNR on certain agreements, based on the DNR's annual review of needs.

The DNR must provide information to the Legislature in an annual report regarding the program usage, lessons learned, and recommendations for future improvements. The DNR must annually consult with the State Fire Defense Committee, fire service representatives, and the State Fire Marshal's Office to review the program performance and upcoming aviation needs.

Summary of Bill:

The expiration date of the legislation creating the Aviation Assurance Funding Program is repealed, making the program permanent.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill is based on a very successful pilot that has had a tremendous impact on keeping fires small before they get out of control. Keeping fires small has saved lives, properties, suppression costs, and freed up DNR resources. Some of these rural areas have fuel types that can spread very quickly and terrain that makes it very difficult for firefighters to reach. Small rural fire departments have limited budgets and air resources are too expensive for them, so before the pilot, they would just not call for air assets. It was initially a pilot because there was resistance, but there has been significant outreach and it has proven its value.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Tom Dent, prime sponsor; Noel Hardin, Asotin County Fire District 1; George Geissler, Department of Natural Resources; and Robert Bell, HUNTIN WITH BOB.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 29 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Gregerson, Vice Chair; Macri, Vice Chair; Couture, Ranking Minority Member; Connors, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Penner, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Schmick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Berg, Bergquist, Burnett, Callan, Corry, Cortes, Doglio, Dye, Fitzgibbon, Keaton, Leavitt, Lekanoff, Manjarrez, Marshall, Peterson, Pollet, Ryu, Springer, Stonier, Street, Thai and Valdez.

Staff: Dan Jones (786-7118).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee On Agriculture & Natural Resources:

No new changes were recommended.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) None.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.