

SENATE BILL REPORT

EHB 1628

As of March 18, 2025

Title: An act relating to the creation of the fire service policy board.

Brief Description: Creating the fire service policy board.

Sponsors: Representatives Bronoske, Griffey, Schmidt, Simmons, Nance, Davis and Salahuddin.

Brief History: Passed House: 3/3/25, 97-0.

Committee Activity: State Government, Tribal Affairs & Elections: 3/18/25.

Brief Summary of Bill

- The Washington State Fire Service Policy Board is created as an advisory board to the state fire marshal.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, TRIBAL AFFAIRS & ELECTIONS

Staff: Danielle Creech (786-7412)

Background: The State Fire Marshal's Office. The director of Fire Protection is the state fire marshal. The State Fire Marshal's Office (SFMO) is located within the Washington State Patrol (WSP).

The SFMO must:

- provide certification for firefighter professional qualifications;
- coordinate and deliver statewide training for firefighting and hazardous materials;
- license and issue certifications to businesses and individuals performing design, installation, testing, and maintenance of fire sprinkler systems;
- publish information regarding fire incidents around the state and timely information for Washington fire service agencies;

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.

- conduct fire and life safety inspections in childcare, health care, and residential care facilities;
- regulate fireworks manufacturers, wholesalers, importers, and general display and pyrotechnic operator licensees for statutory compliance;
- test and certify all cigarette brands sold in Washington under the Fire Safe Cigarette Law; and
- serve as the fire resources coordinator when the Washington State Fire Services Mobilization Plan (Plan) is implemented. The Plan provides personnel, equipment, and other logistical resources when a wildland fire or other emergency exceeds the firefighting capacity of local jurisdictions.

Fire Service Delivery Workgroup. In 2023, the Fire Service Delivery Workgroup (Workgroup) was established to evaluate existing funding and service delivery models for fire services provided by the SFMO. The Workgroup determined that the SFMO cannot maintain adequate levels of response and service to communities without adequate and sustained funding for fire services. Based on its findings, the Workgroup made several recommendations, including:

- creating a workgroup to study and define the necessary steps for an independent SFMO agency;
- creating a legislative liaison position to represent fire service stakeholders and the SFMO;
- establishing the Fire Service Advisory Committee to work with the legislative liaison, the SFMO, the WSP, the Office of Financial Management and the Governor's Office;
- enabling wage parity to sustain fire service recruitment and retention;
- revising civilian staff hiring policies at the WSP to narrow the pool of eligible candidates for noncommissioned SFMO positions;
- allocating adequate funding to firefighting training programs, the All-Risk Mobilization Program, and the SFMO's four unfunded mandates; and
- considering the SFMO's technology modernization study's recommendations.

Summary of Bill: The Washington State Fire Service Policy Board (Board) is created to advise the state fire marshal on all matters related to the purview of the SFMO. This includes but is not limited to developing recommendations regarding agency budget requests and developing strategies to enhance delivery of fire service training and resources. In doing this work, the Board is encouraged to seek input from representatives of industries licensed or regulated by the SFMO, agencies, and other appropriate organizations. The Board may create ad-hoc, voluntary advisory committees as necessary.

Board membership includes:

- the president of the Washington State Council of Firefighters, or the president's designee;
- the president of the Washington State Firefighters' Association, or the president's designee;
- the executive director of the Washington State Fire Commissioner's Association, or

- the director's designee;
- the executive director of the Washington Fire Chiefs Association, or the director's designee; and
- the president of the Washington State Fire Marshals Association, or the president's designee.

The members of the Board must designate an administrative chair to facilitate meetings. Meetings must be held quarterly, at a minimum, as well as subject to the call of the administrative chair. Board members serve without compensation but are eligible for travel reimbursement. Members of advisory committees created by the Board may not receive compensation nor reimbursement. Members of the board and individuals acting on its behalf are immune from civil liability for official acts performed in the course of their duties.

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: PRO: This is a step in the right direction to improve upon the essential services the fire service in Washington State provides. There has been a lot of change in the fire service profession and industry over the course of the last 24 years, and as the mission and focus of the fire service continues to change, it's only appropriate that we convey our needs to the state government. This bill creates an advisory panel that will work collaboratively with the State Fire Marshal's Office to implement a statewide plan for all things fire service related. We believe the reinstatement of the policy board is an important step that has little to no fiscal impact, but will be a great opportunity for coordination and collaboration. This will provide a lot of good insights and collaboration will provide a more effective fire service for all taxpayers and people that reside in Washington.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Dan Bronoske, Prime Sponsor; Steve Brooks, Washington Fire Chiefs; Nicholas Gullickson, Washington State Council of Firefighters; Andrew Schaffran, Washington State Fire Fighters' Association.

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