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**HOUSE BILL 2224**

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**State of Washington**

**69th Legislature**

**2026 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Stuebe, Cortes, Parshley, Hall, Ryu, Eslick, Nance, Goodman, Reeves, Salahuddin, and Timmons

Prefiled 12/31/25. Read first time 01/12/26. Referred to Committee on Local Government.

1 AN ACT Relating to fire protection districts; and amending RCW  
2 52.02.160, 52.02.180, and 84.55.092.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 **Sec. 1.** RCW 52.02.160 and 2017 c 328 s 1 are each amended to  
5 read as follows:

6 (1) As an alternative to the petition method of formation for  
7 fire protection districts provided in this chapter, the legislative  
8 authority of a city or town may by resolution, subject to the  
9 approval of the voters, establish a fire protection district with  
10 boundaries that are the same as the corporate boundaries of the city  
11 or town for the provision of fire prevention services, fire  
12 suppression services, and emergency medical services, and for the  
13 protection of life and property within the city or town.

14 (a) Any resolution adopted by a city or town under this section  
15 to establish a fire protection district must, at a minimum:

16 (i) Contain a financing plan for the fire protection district. As  
17 part of the financing plan, the city or town may propose the  
18 imposition of revenue sources authorized by this title for fire  
19 protection districts, such as property taxes, as provided in chapter  
20 52.16 RCW, or benefit charges, as provided in chapter 52.18 RCW; and

21 (ii) Set a date for a public hearing on the resolution.

1 (b) The financing plan in the resolution adopted by the city or  
2 town must contain the following information regarding property taxes  
3 that will be imposed by the fire protection district and city or town  
4 subsequent to the formation of the district:

5 (i) The dollar amount the fire protection district will levy in  
6 the first year in which the fire protection district imposes any of  
7 the regular property taxes in RCW 52.16.130, 52.16.140, or 52.16.160;

8 (ii) ~~((The))~~ If the fire protection district is formed prior to  
9 July 1, 2026, the city's or town's highest lawful levy for the  
10 purposes of RCW 84.55.092, reduced by the fire protection district's  
11 levy amount from (b)(i) of this subsection. This reduced highest  
12 lawful levy becomes the city's or town's highest lawful levy since  
13 1986 for subsequent levy limit calculations under chapter 84.55 RCW;  
14 and

15 (iii) The estimated aggregate net dollar amount impact on  
16 property owners within the city or town based on the ~~((changes~~  
17 ~~described in (b)(i) and (ii) of this subsection (1))~~ levy rate  
18 including, if the fire protection district is formed prior to July 1,  
19 2026, the city's or town's levy reduction described in (b)(ii) of  
20 this subsection.

21 (c) If a city or town proposes the initial imposition of a  
22 benefit charge as a revenue source for the fire protection district  
23 under (a) of this subsection, the resolution adopted by the city or  
24 town must comply with the requirements of RCW 52.18.030.

25 (d) Notice of public hearing on a resolution adopted by a city or  
26 town must be published on a city website or local newspaper for three  
27 consecutive weeks ~~((in a newspaper of general circulation in the city~~  
28 ~~or town))~~, and must be posted for at least fifteen days prior to the  
29 date of the hearing in three public places within the boundaries of  
30 the proposed fire protection district. Additional notice of the  
31 hearing may be given by mail, or in any manner the city legislative  
32 authorities deem necessary to notify affected persons. All notices  
33 must contain the time, date, and place of the public hearing.

34 (2)(a) A resolution adopted under this section is not effective  
35 unless approved by the voters of the city or town at a general  
36 election. The resolution must be approved:

37 (i) By a simple majority of the voters of the city or town; or

38 (ii) If the resolution proposes the initial imposition of a  
39 benefit charge, by sixty percent of the voters of the city or town.

1 (b) An election to approve or reject a resolution forming a fire  
2 protection district, including the proposed financial plan and any  
3 imposition of revenue sources for the fire protection district, must  
4 be conducted by the election officials of the county or counties in  
5 which the proposed district is located in accordance with the general  
6 election laws of the state. If a resolution forming a fire protection  
7 district provides that the fire protection district will be governed  
8 by a board of independently elected fire commissioners, as permitted  
9 under RCW 52.14.140, then the initial independently elected fire  
10 commissioners must be elected at the same election where the  
11 resolution is submitted to the voters authorizing the creation of the  
12 fire protection district. The election must be held at the next  
13 general election date, according to RCW 29A.04.321 and 29A.04.330,  
14 occurring after the date of the public hearing on the resolution  
15 adopted by the city or town legislative authority. The ballot title  
16 must include the information regarding property taxes that is  
17 required to be in the financing plan of the resolution under  
18 subsection (1)(b) of this section.

19 (c) If a ballot proposition on the resolution is approved by  
20 voters, as provided in (a) of this subsection, the county legislative  
21 authority shall by resolution declare the fire protection district  
22 organized under the name designated in the ballot proposition.

23 (d) Nothing contained in this chapter may be construed to alter a  
24 municipal airport fire department or affect any powers authorized  
25 under RCW 14.08.120(~~((2))~~). If a question arises as to whether this  
26 chapter modifies the affairs of municipal airports in any way, the  
27 answer is no.

28 (3) ((A)) For any fire protection district formed under this  
29 section prior to July 1, 2026, a city or town must reduce its general  
30 fund regular property tax levy by the total combined levy of the fire  
31 protection district as proposed by the district in accordance with  
32 subsection (1)(b)(i) of this section. The reduced levy amount of the  
33 city or town must occur in the first year in which the fire  
34 protection district imposes any of the property taxes in RCW  
35 52.16.130, 52.16.140, or 52.16.160 and must be specified in the  
36 financing plan and ballot proposition as provided in this section. If  
37 the fire protection district does not impose all three levies under  
38 RCW 52.16.130, 52.16.140, and 52.16.160 when it begins operations,  
39 the city must further reduce its general fund regular property tax  
40 levy if the district initially imposes any of the levies in

1 subsequent years, by the amount of such levy or levies initially  
2 imposed in a subsequent year.

3 **Sec. 2.** RCW 52.02.180 and 2017 c 328 s 5 are each amended to  
4 read as follows:

5 (1) Except as provided otherwise in the resolution adopted by the  
6 legislative authority of a city or town establishing a fire  
7 protection district under RCW 52.02.160, all powers, duties, and  
8 functions of the city or town fire department pertaining to fire  
9 protection and emergency services of the city or town are transferred  
10 to the fire protection district on its creation date.

11 (2)(a) The city or town fire department must transfer or deliver  
12 to the fire protection district:

13 (i) All reports, documents, surveys, books, records, files,  
14 papers, or written material in the possession of the city or town  
15 fire department pertaining to fire protection and emergency services  
16 powers, functions, and duties;

17 (ii) All real property and personal property including cabinets,  
18 furniture, office equipment, motor vehicles, and other tangible  
19 property employed by the city or town fire department in carrying out  
20 the fire protection and emergency services powers, functions, and  
21 duties; and

22 (iii) All funds, credits, or other assets held by the city or  
23 town fire department in connection with fire protection and emergency  
24 services powers, functions, and duties.

25 (b) Any appropriations made to the city or town fire department  
26 for carrying out the fire protection and emergency services powers,  
27 functions, and duties of the city or town must be transferred and  
28 credited to the fire protection district.

29 (c) Whenever any question arises as to the transfer of any  
30 personnel, funds, books, documents, records, papers, files,  
31 equipment, or other tangible property used or held in the exercise of  
32 the powers and the performance of the duties and functions  
33 transferred to the fire protection district, the legislative  
34 authority of the city or town must make a determination as to the  
35 proper allocation.

36 (3) All rules and all pending business before the city or town  
37 fire department pertaining to the fire protection and emergency  
38 services powers, functions, and duties transferred must be continued  
39 and acted upon by the fire protection district, and all existing

1 contracts and obligations remain in full force and must be performed  
2 by the fire protection district.

3 (4) The transfer of powers, duties, functions, and personnel of  
4 the city or town fire department do not affect the validity of any  
5 act performed before creation of the fire protection district.

6 (5) If apportionments of budgeted funds are required because of  
7 the transfers, the treasurer for the city or town fire department  
8 must certify the apportionments.

9 (6)(a) Subject to (c) of this subsection, all employees of the  
10 city or town fire department are transferred to the fire protection  
11 district on its creation date. Upon transfer, unless an agreement for  
12 different terms of transfer is reached between the collective  
13 bargaining representatives of the transferring employees and the fire  
14 protection district, an employee is entitled to the employee rights,  
15 benefits, and privileges to which he or she would have been entitled  
16 as an employee of the city or town fire department, including rights  
17 to:

18 (i) Compensation at least equal to the level at the time of  
19 transfer;

20 (ii) Retirement, vacation, sick leave, and any other accrued  
21 benefit;

22 (iii) Promotion and service time accrual; and

23 (iv) The length or terms of probationary periods, including no  
24 requirement for an additional probationary period if one had been  
25 completed before the transfer date.

26 (b) If a city or town provides for civil service in its fire  
27 department, the collective bargaining representatives of the  
28 transferring employees and the fire protection district must  
29 negotiate regarding the establishment of a civil service system  
30 within the fire protection district.

31 (c) Nothing contained in this section may be construed to alter  
32 any existing collective bargaining unit or the provisions of any  
33 existing collective bargaining agreement until the agreement has  
34 expired or until the bargaining unit has been modified as provided by  
35 law.

36 (7) The municipal fire protection authority may contract with the  
37 city or town for services including but not limited to administrative  
38 services such as information technology, financial, and human  
39 resources functions.

1       **Sec. 3.** RCW 84.55.092 and 2017 3rd sp.s. c 13 s 309 are each  
2 amended to read as follows:

3       (1) The regular property tax levy for each taxing district other  
4 than the state's levies may be set at the amount which would be  
5 allowed otherwise under this chapter if the regular property tax levy  
6 for the district for taxes due in prior years beginning with 1986 had  
7 been set at the full amount allowed under this chapter including any  
8 levy authorized under RCW 52.16.160 or 52.26.140(1)(c) that would  
9 have been imposed but for the limitation in RCW 52.18.065 or  
10 52.26.240, applicable upon imposition of the benefit charge under  
11 chapter 52.18 or 52.26 RCW.

12       (2) The purpose of subsection (1) of this section is to remove  
13 the incentive for a taxing district to maintain its tax levy at the  
14 maximum level permitted under this chapter, and to protect the future  
15 levy capacity of a taxing district that reduces its tax levy below  
16 the level that it otherwise could impose under this chapter, by  
17 removing the adverse consequences to future levy capacities resulting  
18 from such levy reductions.

19       (~~(3) Subsection (1) of this section does not apply to any~~  
20 ~~portion of a city or town's regular property tax levy that has been~~  
21 ~~reduced as part of the formation of a fire protection district under~~  
22 ~~RCW 52.02.160.))~~

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