

**SENATE BILL REPORT**

**SB 6014**

**AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS, FEBRUARY 7, 1994**

**Brief Description:** Authorizing a state property tax levy for state fire protection services.

**SPONSORS:** Senators Haugen and Winsley

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS**

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6014 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chairman; Drew, Vice Chairman; Loveland, McCaslin, Oke, Owen and Winsley.

**Staff:** Eugene Green (786-7405)

**Hearing Dates:** January 13, 1994; January 21, 1994

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS**

**Majority Report:** That Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 6014 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Rinehart, Chairman; Quigley, Vice Chairman; Bauer, Bluechel, Gaspard, Hargrove, Hochstatter, Ludwig, Moyer, Owen, Pelz, Snyder, Spanel, Sutherland, Talmadge, West and Wojahn.

**Staff:** Terry Wilson (786-7715)

**Hearing Dates:** February 2, 1994; February 7, 1994

**BACKGROUND:**

During the 1993 session of the Legislature, representatives of the state fire service community asked that a legislative study be undertaken to identify and make recommendations concerning (1) the state's role in providing fire services and (2) the relationship between the state and local providers in assuring an adequate and efficient delivery of fire services. A Fire Study Work Group was appointed under the auspices of the Senate Committee on Government Operations. The Fire Study Work Group met throughout the 1993 interim and analyzed and made recommendations in six areas. Recommendations in five of these areas (gathering and reporting fire statistics, fire service training, fire service inspection, fire investigation, and governance) are contained in a companion measure. This bill represents the Fire Study Work Group's recommendation on funding.

The 1993-95 budget for the Fire Protection Services Division of the Department of Community Development is approximately \$5,300,000. This budget put training at the Fire Training Center at North Bend on a fee basis, cut the fire inspection program, and eliminated the fire investigation program. The federal government had previously eliminated funds for training. Also, previous cuts had been made by the Fire Protection Policy Board in the areas of data reporting (WAFIRS) and curriculum development. The Fire Study Work Group concluded that the fire protection services division is severely underfunded.

**SUMMARY:**

A two-cent statewide property tax levy dedicated to state fire protection responsibilities within the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development is authorized.

It is estimated that this tax would raise approximately \$13,200,000 over the next two calendar years.

The bill contains a referendum clause and shall be submitted to the people at the next succeeding general election (November, 1994).

**EFFECT OF PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE:**

A drafting error is eliminated.

**EFFECT OF PROPOSED SECOND SUBSTITUTE:**

Classified and designated forest land is exempt from the levy.

**Appropriation:** none

**Revenue:** yes

**Fiscal Note:** available

**Effective Date:** Thirty days after approval at November, 1994 general election.

**TESTIMONY FOR (Government Operations):**

These changes are badly needed. State fire protection services are continuing to deteriorate. Loss of life and property from arson is continuing to grow. More and better training, especially for volunteers is crucial for our programs.

**TESTIMONY AGAINST (Government Operations):**

Forest lands should be exempt. They already pay an assessment from Department of Natural Resources.

**TESTIFIED (Government Operations):** Richard Junk, WA Forest Protection Assn. (con); Jim Juston, AWC (pro); Claude Harris, Chief, Seattle Fire Dept. (pro)

**TESTIMONY FOR (Ways & Means):**

The 106 percent limit has reduced the state rate. Most fire-fighters are volunteers and money is needed for their training.

**TESTIMONY AGAINST (Ways & Means):** None

**TESTIFIED (Ways & Means):** Senator Haugen, sponsor (pro); Senator Winsley, sponsor (pro); Gordon Walgren, WA State Assoc. of Fire Chiefs (pro); Pete Spiller, Fire Districts (pro); Ron Haworth, Fire Protection Policy Board (pro); Bruce Holloway, Spokane County Fire District #3 (pro); Claude Harris, Seattle Fire Department (pro); T.J. Nedrow, WA State Fire Fighters Assoc. (pro)