



2016 WFCA Legislative Report

The Washington Fire Commissioners Association Legislative Committee met numerous times during the interim and at its November 12, 2015 meeting, finalized its priorities for the upcoming session which will commence on Monday, January 11, 2016.

This will be a 60-day session with an emphasis by the legislature to address the K-12 school funding issue. We will diligently monitor bills and keep you informed with updates via email every Friday beginning January 22nd. We will continue to be in a defensive position to protect what we currently have.

2016 WFCA PRIORITY ISSUES

- Protect fire districts and regional fire authorities from any proposed property tax reform measures which will have negative impacts on fire district/RFA property tax rates or revenue.
- WFCA will propose legislation to protect individuals' right to volunteer in a fire district or regional fire authority while being a paid firefighter in another district/RFA if volunteering does not conflict with his/her performance in the department in which they are employed.
- Support HB 2148 which will authorize local governments to request a private financial audit in lieu of one by the State Auditor if the State Auditor approves the request. This provides an option for fire districts/RFAs to save money on audit costs when feasible.
- Support legislation to provide authority for a fire district/RFA to approve a city annexing into the district/RFA with the passage of a resolution after the city residents have voted by majority vote to annex into the district/RFA. This will save the fire district/RFA election costs as the Board of Commissioners can approve a city ballot measure passed by a majority of the voters voting within the city.
- WFCA will request an exemption from HB 1745, the state Voting Rights Act, as it is unnecessary for a district/RFA to be included. WFCA is concerned with increased legal costs, election costs and the mandate of commissioner districts.

2016 WFCOA Legislative Report *continued*

- WFCOA will seek a regulatory/agency solution to moving the billing of fire district/RFA workers' compensation employer rates from January to October in order for districts/RFAs to properly budget for any increase when districts/RFAs are developing and approving their budgets.
- WFCOA will work with other local governments on amending the commissioner compensation to be effective on January 1 of the year following the new compensation threshold as calculated by the Office of Financial Management which will assist districts in budgeting. NOTE: Next compensation threshold calculation will be in 2018.

The issues outlined below will be closely monitored in 2016:

- Support Washington Fire Chiefs' proposed legislation to increase the EMS levy from 50 cents up to 75 cents.
- Continue to support capital budget for North Bend Fire Training Academy.
- Oppose EMT/vehicle licensing fees if proposed.
- Support full funding of all public pensions.
- Monitor and take positions on all property tax proposals for cost impacts to fire districts/departments/RFAs.
- **State Agency Legislation.** The WFCOA will monitor and take appropriate positions on state agency legislation, such as: Board for Volunteer Firefighters, Department of Health, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Retirement Systems, Department of Revenue, Insurance Commissioner, State Auditor, State Patrol and State Treasurer.
- **Sunshine Legislation.** The WFCOA will monitor and take appropriate positions on any amendments to the Open Public Records Act and/or Open Public Meetings Act. Some issues we have identified and oppose as adverse legislation include:
 - Erosion of protection of attorney/client privilege for local elected officials.
 - Mandatory recording of executive sessions.

NOTE: Priority papers with more content of specific bills will be sent out to the WFCOA membership via email prior to the January 28, 2016 WFCOA/WFC Legislative Day. We look forward to seeing you in Olympia!