



North Douglas County Fire & EMS
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Committee Chair Golden, Vice Chair Kennemer, and committee members, I am providing written testimony in support of SB 1582.

Under current laws and statutes, a property owner can choose not to be in a Rural Fire Protection District. Property owners do not have a choice on city, county, educational taxes or public safety law enforcement taxes, yet they can choose if they want to pay for Fire Services. The rules need to be updated and aligned with other taxing entity regulations, in an effort, to stabilize District funding and operational logistics.

Logistically, property owners within the fire district boundaries but not incorporated into the district overly complicate emergency response to these areas. We have groups of houses where one house is in the district and the next two are out then more that are in the district. How do you distinguish if someone is in or out during an emergency? Minutes count and lives are at stake. It would be easy to say we just don't respond to those houses, but what if the wrong address was given or no address just an area? Districts have a fiduciary obligation to tax paying members to ensure their safety. How can we do this fairly? The mental health impact to first responders who knowingly do not or cannot respond, in an already emotionally taxing environment can have significant long-lasting impacts.

Most Rural Fire Protection Districts cover Wildland-Urban Interface lands the issues and inequities are magnified. You have properties that have not supported the infrastructure, yet they get the same response through conflagration as everyone else and what if the additional tax dollars provided to the Rural Fire Protection District were able to improve the infrastructure through equipment, personnel, or training that could have reduced the threat in the first place. We hear "just bill me if I need you", but if everyone took that stance then there would not be anyone or equipment to respond. It should be everyone's responsibility to support the infrastructure of emergency services.

I respectfully ask that you support SB 1582 and pass it out of committee and support is in the chamber floor. We should all support our emergency responder who are on the front line of fire, medical, and disaster response and help ensure that everyone getting the services of these responders support the infrastructure to ensure they are available when they are needed.

Respectfully,
Ike Shannon
Fire Chief
North Douglas County Fire and EMS