

Submitter: Mark Bigart  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Revenue  
Measure: SB1068

Committee Chair Meek, Vice Chair Boquist, and committee members, I am providing written testimony in support of SB 1068.

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 educational taxes, city or county taxes, or public safety law enforcement taxes, yet they can choose if they support essential public safety fire and emergency services. For the many reasons outlined here, and more, these rules need to be updated and aligned with other taxing entity regulations in an effort to stabilize District funding and operational logistics because these dollars are vital to support the amount of fire and emergency service infrastructure available to protect and support the area.

Most Rural Fire Protection Districts cover Wildland-Urban Interface lands the issues and inequities are magnified. When some fire districts were established, they do not share common boundary lines, creating unprotect areas between fire districts. If the District boundaries were closed, and all property owners supported their Rural Fire Protection District by being part of the district, these responders can respond to provide lifesaving medical treatment while waiting for the ambulance. 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. It should be everyone's responsibility to support the infrastructure of emergency services.

In addition to fire protection most Rural Fire Protection Districts provide medical first response and being that they are usually rural by nature, the ambulance response times can be quite lengthy.

I respectfully ask that you support SB 1068 and pass it out of committee and support it on the chamber floor. We should all support our emergency responders 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.

Sincerely,  
Mark Bigart  
Fire Chief  
Kellogg Rural Fire District