

INTERIM STUDY PROPOSAL 2019-129

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REQUESTING THE ARKANSAS LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THAT THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON CITY, COUNTY, AND LOCAL AFFAIRS CONDUCT AN INTERIM STUDY TO DETERMINE THE BEST PRACTICES OF FIRE DEPARTMENTS IN THE STATE AND IN THE NATION THAT MAY BE IMPLEMENTED IN A LOCAL COMMUNITY TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY.

WHEREAS, because of the rural nature of local communities that are served by many fire departments in the state, the responsibilities of a fire department include more than just fire protection, including without limitation providing assistance for medical calls, rescues, and other emergency services; and

WHEREAS, a large number of fire departments are staffed by an aging population of volunteers and fire departments are currently having a difficult time obtaining new volunteers and keeping experienced volunteers; and

WHEREAS, there are over nine hundred (900) fire departments in the state and many of these fire departments overlap service areas of other jurisdictions or cover areas that are too large to provide adequate fire protection; and

WHEREAS, there is no central means of communication to and for these fire departments and no statewide coordinator; and

WHEREAS, data collection across the state is needed to gather information on equipment supply and demand, funding issues, and other related areas; and

WHEREAS, national and state research should be analyzed to study possible improvements to the public protection classification system used by the state to evaluate the fire loss risk of local communities and its impact on property insurance rates; and

1 WHEREAS, there are a number of fire departments that operate within
2 municipalities for municipalities with no organized municipal fire
3 department; and the procedures and challenges for these departments need to
4 be examined; and
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6 WHEREAS, there is consistent misuse of fire department funds, creating
7 a need for a uniform audit mechanism to be put in place; and
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9 WHEREAS, there are a number of different types of fire departments in
10 the state, resulting in a lack of uniformity in business structure and
11 operation that is confusing for property owners, insurance companies, and
12 fire departments themselves; and in light of recent legislation affecting
13 fire protection districts, the differences in departments need to be examined
14 and compared to determine advantages and disadvantages of the types of fire
15 department organization,
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17 BE IT PROPOSED BY THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON CITY, COUNTY, AND LOCAL AFFAIRS OF
18 THE NINETY-SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:
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20 THAT the Senate Committee On City, County, And Local Affairs conduct an
21 interim study to determine the best practices of fire departments in the
22 state and in the nation that may be implemented in a local community to
23 improve efficiency.
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25 BE IT FURTHER PROPOSED THAT the study review and analyze the impact of
26 an increase in funding to volunteer fire departments.
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28 BE IT FURTHER PROPOSED THAT the study review the role of fire
29 departments including without limitation response to fires, medical
30 assistance calls, rescues, and other emergency services.
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32 BE IT FURTHER PROPOSED THAT the study review and analyze potential
33 incentives and methods to recruit and retain volunteers for volunteer fire
34 departments.
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1 BE IT FURTHER PROPOSED THAT the study review the number of volunteer
2 fire departments and any available resources in the state to determine the
3 most efficient organization and operation of volunteer fire departments and
4 evaluate if consolidation of fire departments or other options or measures
5 are necessary to improve efficiency.

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7 BE IT FURTHER PROPOSED THAT the study review any and all other
8 pertinent information related to this endeavor.

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10 Respectfully submitted,

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14 Senator Kim Hammer
15 District 33

16 Prepared by: KLC/KLC
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