SENATE BILL 256

55TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2021

INTRODUCED BY

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AN ACT

RELATING TO PUBLIC FINANCE; INCREASING TRANSFERS FROM THE FIRE
PROTECTION FUND TO THE FIRE PROTECTION GRANT FUND; PROVIDING
THAT THE FIRE PROTECTION GRANT FUND SHALL NOT REVERT AT THE END
OF A FISCAL YEAR; REMOVING THE REQUIREMENT THAT STIPENDS FOR
VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS BE PROVIDED ONLY IN UNDERSERVED AREAS;
REQUIRING THAT THE FIRE PROTECTION GRANT COUNCIL ASSESS THE
NEED FOR RECRUITING AND RETENTION PROGRAMS FOR VOLUNTEER
FIREFIGHTERS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

SECTION 1. Section 59A-53-5.2 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 2007,
Chapter 152, Section 1, as amended) is amended to read:

"59A-53-5.2. APPROPRIATIONS AND TRANSFERS FROM THE FIRE
PROTECTION FUND.--

A. For each fiscal year, the amount to be
distributed by the marshal pursuant to Sections 59A-53-4, 59A-53-5 and 59A-53-5.1 NMSA 1978 is appropriated from the fire protection fund to the [superintendent] state fire marshal for the purpose of making the following distributions:

(1) the total amount to be distributed during the fiscal year pursuant to Sections 59A-53-4, 59A-53-5 and 59A-53-5.1 NMSA 1978;

(2) the total amount of other appropriations from the fire protection fund for the fiscal year;

(3) on June 30, 2017, no distribution shall be made to the fire protection grant fund; [and]

(4) [beginning] in fiscal [year] years 2019 through 2021, periodic allotments not to exceed forty and two-tenths percent of the projected remaining balance in the fire protection fund shall be distributed to the fire protection grant fund; and

(5) beginning in fiscal year 2022, periodic allotments equaling the total projected remaining balance in the fire protection fund shall be distributed to the fire protection grant fund.

B. On June 30 of each year, the remaining balance in the fire protection fund shall be transferred to the [general fund] fire protection grant fund."

SECTION 2. Section 59A-53-18 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 2006, Chapter 103, Section 7, as amended) is amended to read:
"59A-53-18. FIRE PROTECTION GRANT FUND--CREATED--
USES.--The "fire protection grant fund" is created in the state
treasury. The fund shall consist of transfers, distributions,
appropriations, gifts, grants, donations and bequests made to
the fund. Income from the fund shall be credited to the fund,
and money in the fund shall not revert or be transferred to
any other fund at the end of a fiscal year.
Money in the fund is appropriated to the fire protection grant
council for the purposes of making distributions approved by
the council for the critical needs of municipal fire
departments and county fire districts. Expenditures from the
fund shall be made on warrant of the secretary of finance and
administration pursuant to vouchers signed by the marshal."

SECTION 3. Section 59A-53-19 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 2006,
Chapter 103, Section 8, as amended) is amended to read:

"59A-53-19. FIRE PROTECTION GRANT COUNCIL--DUTIES.--
A. The "fire protection grant council" is created.
The council consists of:

(1) a representative of the New Mexico
municipal league;

(2) a representative of the New Mexico
association of counties;

(3) two members appointed by the fire services
council, who shall serve at the pleasure of the council;

(4) three members, one from each congressional
district, appointed by the governor who shall serve at the
pleasure of the governor; and

(5) the marshal, who shall serve as a
nonvoting advisory member. The council shall elect a chair and
vice chair from its membership.

B. The public members are entitled to receive per
diem and mileage as provided in the Per Diem and Mileage Act
and shall receive no other compensation, perquisite or
allowance.

C. The council shall develop criteria for assessing
the critical needs of municipal fire departments and county
fire districts for:

(1) fire apparatus and equipment;
(2) communications equipment;
(3) equipment for wildfires;
(4) fire station construction or expansion;
(5) equipment for hazardous material response;
[and]
(6) stipends for volunteer firefighters [in
underserved areas]; and
(7) recruiting and retention programs for
volunteer firefighters.

D. Applications for grant assistance from the fire
protection grant fund shall be made by fire districts to the
council in accordance with the requirements of the council.
Using criteria developed by the council, the council shall evaluate applications and prioritize those applications most in need of grant assistance from the fund. To the extent that money in the fund is available, the council shall award grant assistance for those prioritized applications.

E. In awarding grant assistance, the council may require conditions and procedures necessary to ensure that the money is expended in the most prudent manner.

F. When considering applications for grant assistance to pay stipends to volunteer firefighters in underserved areas, the council shall:

[(1)] define "underserved area";

[(2)] (1) ensure the proposed stipends will comply with the federal Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 and United States department of labor requirements for maintaining volunteer status;

[(3)] (2) require a basic level of training before a volunteer may receive a stipend;

[(4)] (3) consider whether the fire district requires a service commitment from its volunteer firefighters in exchange for stipends; and

[(5)] (4) weight the applications against other criteria or requirements determined by the council."

SECTION 4. EFFECTIVE DATE.--The effective date of the provisions of this act is July 1, 2021.