

HCR 2 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal and World Affairs

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Meeting Dates: 3/11, 3/20

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The resolution states that the Oregon Legislative Assembly supports the state’s firefighters and declares its commitment to ensuring their health and safety, supports research into the effects of perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), and declares it will ban the future use of PFAS in personal protective gear once suitable non-PFAS firefighting gear is available.

Fiscal impact: No fiscal impact

Revenue impact: No revenue impact

HOUSE VOTE: Ayes, 58; Nays, 0

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Carcinogenic nature of protective firefighting gear
- Availability of alternate materials to manufacture gear

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

In 2023, the National Institute of Standards and Technology determined that occupational exposure of firefighters to carcinogenic chemicals may increase their risk of developing different types of cancer, and that textiles used to manufacture the protective coats and pants worn by firefighters often contain measurable amounts of potentially cancer-causing chemicals called perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). These chemicals resist grease, oil, water, and heat, and they break down very slowly. Subsequent studies showed that protective firefighting gear releases more PFAS when subject to wear and tear, and that firefighters have more PFAS in their blood than the average person. Currently there is no effective substitute for the PFAS used in the manufacturing process of personal protective firefighting gear.

House Concurrent Resolution 2 declares the Oregon Legislative Assembly’s support of firefighters and their health, research into PFAS, and the replacement of PFAS firefighting gear once an alternative is available.