

SENATE THIRD READING  
SB 345 (Hurtado)  
As Introduced February 12, 2025  
Majority vote

## SUMMARY

This bill authorizes the State Fire Marshal (SFM) to establish and collect fees associated with the California Fire Service Training and Education Program (CFSTEP) and California Fire and Arson Training Act (Act) only to the extent that state appropriations and other funding sources are insufficient to cover the necessary costs of CFSTEP and Act activities, instead of generally authorizing the SFM to establish and collect such fees.

### Major Provisions

- 1) Authorizes the SFM to establish and collect specified admission fees only to the extent that state appropriations and other funding sources for those seminars, conferences, and specialized training are insufficient to cover the necessary costs associated with CFSTEP.
- 2) Authorizes the SFM to establish fees only to the extent that state appropriations and other funding sources for the purposes of implementing the Act are insufficient to cover the necessary costs of the activities eligible to be paid from those fees.

## COMMENTS

*Background:* This bill would authorize SFM to establish and collect the admission fees and other fees associated with the CFSTEP, and to establish the fees to implement the California Fire and Arson Training Act, only to the extent that state appropriations and other funding sources are insufficient to cover the necessary costs of the activities eligible to be paid from those fees.

*Equity impact:* According to the author's office, "When the State Fire Training (SFT) program was established in California, it relied on user fees to recover the cost of staff, course development and certification. Over the years the fire service has become more professional and certifications are now required for every position in the fire service. To generate enough revenue, fees needed to be raised by over 200% and in some cases 400%. This sharp rise in costs has resulted in courses and certification becoming unaffordable to volunteer firefighters and individuals seeking entry level positions. SB 345 allows the State Fire Marshal to accept additional funding sources for the California Fire Service Training and Education Program. The bill would make the same change relative to the California Fire and Arson Training Act. Senate Bill 345 aims to address the escalating costs of fire training programs, and ensure that individuals who were priced out of the fire service are afforded equitable opportunities. By mitigating the financial burden associated with fire training and certification, this bill seeks to foster accessibility to this field regardless of an individual's financial situation."

*California State Fire Training (SFT):* The SFT is a division within the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM), which establishes, develops, and delivers standardized training and education for the California fire service. The SFT annually develops a curriculum development plan for courses to be updated or added to the CFSTEP. SFT curriculum is designed using the State Fire Training Curriculum Development Model. SFT is responsible for establishing the rules and regulations, course development, course delivery, and testing for over 75 courses and certificates. These courses are critical to training firefighters to provide state-of-the-art protection to everyone

in need in the state. The program includes pre-servicing training through 60 accredited community colleges, accredited fire academies, and private vendors. Over 10,000 paid and volunteer firefighters participate in these programs every year. These training programs are expanding to meet the reality of California, where wildfires, floods, and other disasters occur year-round.

### **According to the Author**

In order to combat future California wildfires, our first responders should have every resource possible to help save lives and safeguard communities. A fully staffed and well trained firefighting force is essential to successfully combating fires in the state. However, rising training fees can deter individuals from choosing a career in the fire service. SB 345 aims to address rising training costs by permitting the State Fire Marshal to accept additional funding sources for the California Fire Service Training and Education Program. Permitting the State Fire Marshall to receive additional funding sources for training programs will help to mitigate rising fees for those seeking fire training certification. California cannot afford to let high training costs stand in the way of public safety.

### **Arguments in Support**

The California Fire Chiefs Association (CalChiefs) and the Fire Districts Association of California (FDAC) write, "to express their support for Senate Bill 345, which improves access to firefighter training by allowing the State Fire Marshal to accept additional funding sources for the California Fire Service Training and Education Program. SB 345 directly addresses this issue by expanding funding options, ensuring that firefighters, fire departments, and students have access to affordable, high-quality training. With California facing increasingly complex fire conditions, now is the time to invest in the next generation of firefighters by making training both accessible and sustainable."

The City of Tulare writes, "California State Fire Training (SFT) provides curriculum and certification to current fire department firefighters, and individuals seeking a career in the fire service. Over the years the fire service has become more professional, and certifications are now required for every position in the fire service. To generate enough revenue, fees needed to be raised by over 200% and in some cases as high as 400%. This has resulted in courses and certification becoming unaffordable to volunteer firefighters and for individuals seeking entry level positions. SB 345 allows the State Fire Marshal to accept additional funding sources for the California Fire Service Training and Education Program."

### **Arguments in Opposition**

None on file.

## **FISCAL COMMENTS**

According to the Assembly Committee on Appropriations, "Cost pressures of an unknown, but potentially significant, amount to the state by limiting the authority of the SFM to collect specified fees only when state appropriations and other funding sources cannot cover the costs, thus signaling that such appropriations are a legislative priority (General Fund). The California State Fire Training (SFT) division within the SFM does not generally receive state budget appropriations, as the program is fully funded through user fees."

**VOTES****SENATE FLOOR: 38-0-2**

**YES:** Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Grove, Hurtado, Jones, Laird, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

**ABS, ABST OR NV:** Limón, Reyes

**ASM EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT: 7-0-0**

**YES:** Ransom, Hadwick, Arambula, Bains, Bennett, Calderon, DeMaio

**ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-0**

**YES:** Wicks, Sanchez, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Elhawary, Fong, Mark González, Ahrens, Pacheco, Pellerin, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

**UPDATED**

VERSION: February 12, 2025

CONSULTANT: Mike Dayton / E.M. / (916) 319-3802

FN: 0001313