



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Renton Regional Fire Authority Introduces Proposition 1

*A Measure on the November 2 Ballot Regarding the Continuation of the Fire Benefit Charge*

[RENTON, WA – 09.29.2021]

Renton Regional Fire Authority (Renton RFA) has introduced Proposition 1 on the ballot for the November 2 election. Proposition 1 asks Renton voters to decide on the continuation of the Fire Benefit Charge (FBC).

The FBC currently makes up over 40% of total revenue for Renton RFA. This funding is necessary to maintain firefighter staffing, safety equipment, fire engines, aid units, specialty vehicles, and fire stations. It is also necessary to support specialty programs delivered by Renton RFA, such as public education, fire investigation, and FDCARES, which helps vulnerable members of the community.

The FBC is one of Renton RFA's two primary funding sources. The other is property tax (fire levy). Unlike property tax, which can fluctuate based on changes in the economy, the FBC is a consistent and reliable source of funding. Using a standardized formula, FBC costs are distributed to property owners based on the fire protection resources necessary to protect their property. Properties that require more protection pay more under the FBC; properties requiring less protection pay less.

Typically, commercial, industrial, and multi-family properties pay more under the FBC, and residential properties pay less. In combination, these two funding sources provide a stable and sustainable source of revenue for Renton RFA. The FBC also keeps property taxes one-third lower than they would be otherwise.

Renton RFA Fire Chief Steve Heitman had this to say about the measure: "As the Fire Chief for Renton Regional Fire Authority, it is my duty to ensure that our organization is providing the best possible service to our community. For the last five years, the fire benefit charge (FBC) has provided the funding necessary to achieve that goal. It is critical in our ability to maintain service levels and response capabilities by providing funding for firefighter staffing, ongoing required training, the purchase and maintenance of fire and EMS apparatus and equipment, and the construction and maintenance of new and existing fire stations.

"If Proposition 1 is approved, we will be able to continue to fund these aspects of our organization and maintain the service levels our community expects and depends on. If voters reject Proposition 1, we will have to consider ways to address the over 40% gap it will leave in our operating budget, which may include reducing our service levels, raising the property tax, or eliminating/altering public programs, an example of which would be our FDCARES program.

"I encourage those throughout Renton and Fire District 25 to vote on Proposition 1 during the November election, and make their voices heard about the future of fire and life safety for the Renton community."

Here are three additional key facts about the FBC:

1. This is not a new fee. The FBC was first approved by voters in 2016. Proposition 1 is asking voters to decide on the continuation of the FBC, as required by state law after a period of time.
2. The FBC allows Renton RFA to diversify its revenue and have a consistent funding source, rather than rely solely on property tax, which can fluctuate for various reasons – a global pandemic, for example.
3. Discounts and exemptions apply. Low-income seniors and disabled persons who qualify for a discount or exemption on their property tax may also receive a discount or exemption on their FBC. Those with certain monitored fire protection systems, such as a monitored fire alarm and/or fire sprinkler system, may also be eligible for a discount.

If Proposition 1 is approved, the service levels and response capabilities that the Renton community has grown accustomed to over the last five years will be maintained. However, if the measure is rejected, Renton RFA will have to consider options to address the over 40% gap in revenue that will be left behind as a result.

The most important thing the Renton community can do is make their voices heard in the November 2 election by casting their vote on Proposition 1. For more information regarding this important ballot measure, please visit [www.rentonrfa.org/proposition1](http://www.rentonrfa.org/proposition1). If you have any questions regarding Proposition 1 or the FBC, Renton RFA staff are ready to provide answers. Community members can submit their questions online at [www.rentonrfa.org/fbc-email](http://www.rentonrfa.org/fbc-email) or request more information over the phone at 425-276-9500.

***About Renton Regional Fire Authority***

*Renton Regional Fire Authority serves the communities of Renton, Fire District 25, and Fire District 40. With a coverage area of 33.29 miles, Renton RFA provides fire and life safety services to over 135,000 community members (2020). The Renton RFA team abides by the guiding principles of professionalism, integrity, leadership, accountability, and respect, and continually works to build an organization that reflects the unique diversity of the Renton community. Learn more at [www.RentonRFA.org](http://www.RentonRFA.org) or call 425-276-9500.*

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