**South Carolina General Assembly**

125th Session, 2023-2024

**S. 781**

**STATUS INFORMATION**

General Bill

Sponsors: Senator Gustafson

Companion/Similar bill(s): 4294

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Introduced in the Senate on May 4, 2023

Currently residing in the Senate Committee on **Finance**

Summary: Millage increases

**HISTORY OF LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS**

Date Body Action Description with journal page number

5/4/2023 Senate Introduced and read first time ([Senate Journal‑page 9](h:\sj\20230504.docx))

5/4/2023 Senate Referred to Committee on **Finance** ([Senate Journal‑page 9](h:\sj\20230504.docx))

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**VERSIONS OF THIS BILL**

[05/04/2023](https://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess125_2023-2024/prever/781_20230504.docx)

A bill

TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 6‑1‑320, RELATING TO THE LIMITATION ON MILLAGE INCREASES, SO AS TO ALLOW THE GOVERNING BODY OF A rural COUNTY TO SUSPEND THE LIMITATION FOR THE PURPOSE OF SUPPORTING A FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT.

Whereas, the millage cap set forth in Section 6‑1‑320 hinders the ability of rural county fire districts to adequately provide services within the county; and

Whereas, to account for the shortfall and provide essential fire services, counties are forced to establish fees to support the service that disparately affects the citizens of the county; and

Whereas, allowing a rural county to exceed the millage limitation to support fire services would enable the county to cease imposing such fees. Now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. This act may be cited as the “Funding Fire Act”.

SECTION 2. Section 6‑1‑320(B) of the S.C. Code is amended by adding:

(8) for a county council to support a fire protection district in a rural county that was created pursuant to Chapter 19, Title 4, or Chapter 11, Title 6. However, the two‑thirds vote of the membership of the membership must occur no later than one year of the effective date of this item. A county council only may utilize the provisions of this item once. Any increased revenue resulting from the suspension of the millage limitation first must be used on a dollar‑for‑dollar basis to reduce fees or other similar charges that support fire protection. Once all such fees are eliminated, additional revenue must be used to support the fire protection district. For purposes of this subsection, a “rural county” is any county with a population of seventy thousand or less that does not have a full‑time fire department that is fully supported by the local applicable fire millage.

SECTION 3. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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