

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY JUNE 25, 2015

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY JUNE 16, 2015

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2015–16 REGULAR SESSION

Assembly Joint Resolution

No. 18

Introduced by Assembly Members Patterson and Gatto
(Coauthors: Assembly Members Travis Allen and Olsen)
(Coauthors: Senators Hertzberg and Runner)

May 27, 2015

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 18—Relative to the federal Wildfire Disaster Funding Act.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AJR 18, as amended, Patterson. Federal Wildfire Disaster Funding Act.

This measure would urge the Congress of the United States to support H.R. 167, the federal Wildfire Disaster Funding Act, in order to provide a long-term, stable source of funding for federal agencies to conduct the necessary fuels management on national forest lands, while retaining resources to suppress catastrophic wildfires.

Fiscal committee: no.

- 1 WHEREAS, According to the United States Forest Service,
- 2 approximately 58 million acres of national forest lands, or one-third
- 3 of the entire National Forest System, are in need of restoration due
- 4 to the high risk for catastrophic wildfire; and
- 5 WHEREAS, California is home to 21 national forests; and

1 WHEREAS, Over the last three decades, fire season lengths
2 have increased by 60 to 80 days, and annual acreages burned have
3 more than doubled to over seven million acres; and

4 WHEREAS, The United States Forest Service plans to thin less
5 than 3 percent of its high-risk acreage in the next federal fiscal
6 year; and

7 WHEREAS, One percent of the wildfires fought on national
8 forest lands each year consume up to 30 percent of the annual fire
9 budget, and the wildland fire management appropriation has tripled
10 its portion of the United States Forest Service budget from 17
11 percent to 51 percent from 1995 to 2014, inclusive; and

12 WHEREAS, Over seven of the last 12 years, the United States
13 Forest Service and the United States Department of the Interior
14 have had to divert over \$2 billion in funds from other forestry and
15 land management programs to fund firefighting efforts; and

16 WHEREAS, This “fire borrowing” has had adverse effects on
17 other United States Forest Service projects, with funds being
18 transferred from other programs that provide necessary hazardous
19 fuel reduction and vegetation management on national forest lands;
20 and

21 WHEREAS, This “fire borrowing,” in 2012, consisted of \$440
22 million being transferred to the fire suppression account and
23 projects at all levels, including multiple fuel reduction projects on
24 national forest lands in California, being cancelled or deferred;
25 and

26 WHEREAS, It has been shown that post-wildfire rehabilitation
27 costs can exceed the costs of wildfire suppression by two to 30
28 times; and

29 WHEREAS, Frequent, severe wildfires result in great
30 environmental damage, and the prevention of wildfires is necessary
31 to decrease the great risk posed to California due to *drought*,
32 *climate change*, and the large amount of overgrown national forest
33 lands in the state; and

34 WHEREAS, The Governors of California, Washington, and
35 Oregon requested the 113th Congress to support common sense
36 wildfire funding, as embodied in the federal Wildfire Disaster
37 Funding Acts of 2014, H.R. 3992 and S. 1875, but these pieces of
38 legislation were not signed into law; and

39 WHEREAS, Catastrophic wildfires are an ongoing yet
40 preventable threat to California and its residents, and the inability

1 of federal agencies to manage national forest lands appropriately
2 due to funding constraints is a pressing issue that must be addressed
3 as quickly as possible; now, therefore, be it

4 *Resolved by the Assembly and the Senate of the State of*
5 *California, jointly,* That the Legislature of the State of California
6 respectfully urges the 114th Congress of the United States to
7 support H.R. 167, the federal Wildfire Disaster Funding Act, in
8 order to provide a long-term, stable source of funding for federal
9 agencies to conduct the necessary fuels management on national
10 forest lands, while retaining resources to suppress truly catastrophic
11 wildfires; and be it further

12 *Resolved,* That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
13 of this resolution to the Speaker of the House of Representatives,
14 to the Majority Leader of the Senate, and to each Senator and
15 Representative from California in the Congress of the United
16 States.