

First Regular Session
Seventieth General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO

INTRODUCED

LLS NO. 15-0907.01 Duane Gall x4335

SENATE BILL 15-205

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

Roberts and Garcia,

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

Keyser and Hamner,

Senate Committees
Judiciary

House Committees

A BILL FOR AN ACT

101 CONCERNING THE UTILIZATION OF VETERANS' FIRE CORPS PROGRAMS
102 BY THE DIVISION OF FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL IN THE
103 DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY.

Bill Summary

(Note: This summary applies to this bill as introduced and does not reflect any amendments that may be subsequently adopted. If this bill passes third reading in the house of introduction, a bill summary that applies to the reengrossed version of this bill will be available at <http://www.leg.state.co.us/bills summaries>.)

The bill states legislative findings concerning the increasing severity of wildfires in Colorado, the scarcity of firefighting crews during the periods when fires often occur, the availability of post-9/11 era veterans to help if needed, and the importance of providing employment and training to these veterans in natural resource management and

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.
Capital letters indicate new material to be added to existing statute.
Dashes through the words indicate deletions from existing statute.

wildland fire control.

The bill defines key terms and authorizes the division of fire prevention and control to use moneys in the wildfire preparedness fund to create or sustain firefighting units consisting primarily of post-9/11 era veterans.

1 *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:*

2 **SECTION 1. Short title.** This act shall be known and may be
3 cited as the "Veterans Fire Corps Act".

4 **SECTION 2. Legislative declaration.** (1) The general assembly
5 hereby finds, determines, and declares that:

6 (a) The threat of wildfire is a matter of serious concern to
7 Colorado residents, especially to those living in the wildland-urban
8 interface;

9 (b) In the last decade, the average number of acres burned
10 annually by wildfires in Colorado has more than tripled, and Colorado has
11 experienced some of its worst fires on record;

12 (c) Several of these fires have occurred outside of the traditional
13 wildland fire season, during what is known as the "shoulder season" when
14 state and federal hand firefighting crews are virtually non-existent;

15 (d) Since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United
16 States, approximately two million eight hundred thousand men and
17 women have served in the United States armed forces;

18 (e) Colorado is home to more than four hundred sixteen thousand
19 veterans, of which more than forty-five thousand are post-9/11 era
20 veterans, and in spite of their military training and experience, a
21 significant number of these veterans are unemployed or underemployed;
22 and

23 (f) Veterans' fire corps programs provide training and on-the-job

1 experience for post-9/11 era veterans interested in entering into careers
2 and gaining experience in natural resource management and wildland fire
3 control.

4 (2) Therefore, the general assembly:

5 (a) Finds that it is in the public interest to help returning veterans
6 find employment;

7 (b) Determines that the purpose of this act is to help ensure the
8 year-round availability of qualified hand crews, while providing training
9 and employment opportunities for veterans of the post-9/11 era; and

10 (c) Declares that the division of fire prevention and control, to the
11 extent practicable, should train, equip, and supervise hand crews
12 employed by veterans' fire corps programs in Colorado for wildland fire
13 mitigation and suppression.

14 **SECTION 3.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 24-33.5-1202, **add**
15 (8.2) and (14.5) as follows:

16 **24-33.5-1202. Definitions.** As used in this part 12, unless the
17 context otherwise requires:

18 (8.2) "POST-9/11 ERA VETERAN" MEANS AN HONORABLY
19 SEPARATED VETERAN WHO SERVED ON ACTIVE DUTY DURING THE
20 MILITARY CAMPAIGN PERIOD THAT STARTED AFTER THE SEPTEMBER 11,
21 2001, TERRORIST ATTACKS ON THE UNITED STATES, AND CONTINUING
22 UNTIL THE DATE OF THE END OF HOSTILITIES AS DETERMINED BY THE
23 GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

24 (14.5) "VETERANS' FIRE CORPS PROGRAM" MEANS A PROGRAM
25 THAT IS ORGANIZED BY A CONSERVATION CORPS OR YOUTH CORPS
26 ACCREDITED BY THE COLORADO YOUTH CORPS ASSOCIATION AND THAT
27 PROVIDES TRAINING AND ON-THE-JOB EXPERIENCE FOR POST-9/11 ERA

1 VETERANS INTERESTED IN ENTERING INTO CAREERS AND GAINING
2 EXPERIENCE IN NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND WILDLAND FIRE
3 CONTROL.

4 **SECTION 4.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 24-33.5-1227, **add**
5 (1) (c) (III) as follows:

6 **24-33.5-1227. Wildfire preparedness fund - creation - gifts,**
7 **grants, and donations authorized - wildfire preparedness plan -**
8 **report.** (1) (c) (III) THE DIVISION MAY USE MONEYS IN THE WILDFIRE
9 PREPAREDNESS FUND FOR THE PURPOSE OF TRAINING, EQUIPPING, OR
10 SUPERVISING ONE OR MORE HAND CREWS EMPLOYED BY VETERANS' FIRE
11 CORPS PROGRAMS IN COLORADO FOR WILDLAND FIRE MITIGATION AND
12 SUPPRESSION.

13 **SECTION 5. Safety clause.** The general assembly hereby finds,
14 determines, and declares that this act is necessary for the immediate
15 preservation of the public peace, health, and safety.