



SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL 16-002

BY SENATOR(S) Jones and Roberts, Baumgardner, Cooke, Hodge, Merrifield, Aguilar, Carroll, Crowder, Donovan, Garcia, Grantham, Guzman, Heath, Hill, Holbert, Jahn, Johnston, Kefalas, Kerr, Lambert, Lundberg, Marble, Martinez Humenik, Neville T., Newell, Scheffel, Scott, Sonnenberg, Steadman, Tate, Todd, Ulibarri, Woods, Cadman;

also REPRESENTATIVE(S) Coram and Vigil, Arndt, Becker K., Buck, Hamner, Mitsch Bush, Singer, Thurlow, Brown, Buckner, Carver, Conti, Court, DelGrosso, Dore, Duran, Esgar, Everett, Fields, Foote, Garnett, Ginal, Humphrey, Joshi, Kagan, Klingenschmitt, Kraft-Tharp, Landgraf, Lawrence, Lebsock, Lee, Leonard, Lontine, Lundeen, McCann, Moreno, Navarro, Neville P., Pabon, Pettersen, Primavera, Priola, Rankin, Ransom, Rosenthal, Roupe, Ryden, Saine, Salazar, Sias, Tyler, Van Winkle, Willett, Williams, Wilson, Windholz, Winter, Wist, Young, Hullinghorst.

CONCERNING THE NEED FOR CONGRESS TO FUND CATASTROPHIC WILDFIRE RESPONSE COSTS OUTSIDE OF FEDERAL FOREST MANAGEMENT AGENCIES' NORMAL BUDGETS.

WHEREAS, There are about 24 million acres of forests and woodlands in Colorado, of which more than two-thirds are managed by the federal government; and

WHEREAS, Colorado's forests are increasingly susceptible to forest fires, with an average of about 40,000 acres burned per year from 2004 through 2007 but an average of more than 140,000 acres burned per year from 2008 through 2014; and

WHEREAS, According to the Insurance Information Institute, Colorado has the second highest percentage of households that are at high or extreme risk from wildfires of any state in the nation; and

WHEREAS, Under current federal law, money that was originally budgeted to mitigate fire risk, protect and restore watersheds, increase forest health, promote recreational opportunities, and conduct necessary forest planning is diverted to fight fires once the amount budgeted for fire fighting has been depleted; and

WHEREAS, The United States Forest Service spent only 16% of its annual budget on fire suppression and response in 1995, but recently announced that in 2015, for the first time, it will spend more than half its budget to fight wildfires, and by 2025 it expects to spend 67% of its budget on that task; and

WHEREAS, A 2013 study by Headwaters Economics showed that in the 1990s, average federal spending to suppress wildfires was less than \$1 billion annually, but, since 2002, federal spending has risen to over \$3 billion annually and costs are still rising; and

WHEREAS, Paying for catastrophic wildfire response should not come at the expense of programs that reduce the risk of wildfires because doing so plainly creates a feedback loop that increases the frequency and severity of catastrophic wildfires; and

WHEREAS, Congress is currently considering several measures that would create alternative ways to pay for catastrophic wildfire response costs; and

WHEREAS, The General Assembly's Water Resources Review Committee and Wildfire Matters Review Committee have approved this Joint Memorial; now, therefore,

*Be It Resolved by the Senate of the Seventieth General Assembly of the State of Colorado, the House of Representatives concurring herein:*

That Congress should enact laws necessary to protect federal land management agencies' ability to mitigate the risk of catastrophic wildfires and manage the lands within their jurisdiction by funding catastrophic wildfire response in a manner analogous to that used for natural disasters.

*Be It Further Resolved,* That a copy of this Joint Memorial be provided to Colorado's congressional delegation, the chairs of the

congressional committees of reference providing forest service oversight, Governor John Hickenlooper, the Western Governors' Association, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, and Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell.



Bill L. Cadman  
PRESIDENT OF  
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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE  
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SECRETARY OF  
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