



## Colorado State Fire Chiefs' Association

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### Support Senate Bill 09-018

#### Concerning the Creation of a High-Risk Communities Wildfire Mitigation Grant Program

(Sen. Kopp & Gibbs, Rep. S. King & Scanlan)

#### What the bill does:

SB09-018 requires the Colorado State Forest Service to develop and implement a program to provide grants to local governments, the state, the federal government, fire protection districts, and homeowner's associations for wildfire mitigation efforts.

#### Why support the bill:

- Within the context of "all-hazards" preparedness, one of the greatest risks confronting Coloradoans is the threat of catastrophic wildfire. While the risk of wildfire cannot be eliminated, much can be done to reduce the risk and the subsequent impacts of the catastrophic wildfire that will occur.
- The wildfire hazard in Colorado threatens human life (including the lives of firefighters sent in to manage these fires), water quality, property values and tax revenues, recreation, and tourism, as well as electrical, communication, and transportation infrastructure.
- The problem is growing. A new survey shows that bark beetles have killed another 400,000 acres of pine trees in Colorado, boosting to nearly 2 million acres the total area affected since the outbreak was first detected in 1996. The survey also showed problems with other trees: The decline of 542,000 acres of large aspen groves and 64,000 acres of beetle-infested spruces. In addition, homes, businesses and whole subdivisions continue to be built in forested areas, adding to the State's Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) fire problem.
- There is critical need reduce the danger of wildfire in the WUI and to do this requires a partnership between property owners and all levels of government; local, state and federal to implement wildfire mitigation measures.
- SB09-018 (on page 3) identifies the types of actions that constitute mitigation measures. These include: the creation of a defensible space around structures; the establishment of fuel breaks; the thinning of woody vegetation for the primary purpose of reducing risk to structures from wild land fire; the secondary treatment of woody fuels by lopping and scattering, piling, chipping, removing from the site, or prescribed burning; and other preventive activities designed to reduce the amount of damage caused by wildfires.
- Across the WUI areas of Colorado, Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) have identified many mitigation projects that must be accomplished in to reduce the wildfire hazard; however, the absence of adequate funding for these projects has prevented them being carried out.

**"Serving the Chief Fire Officers of Colorado Since 1968"**

- SB09-018 would help address this need by appropriating \$10 million annually (from FY 2008-09 through FY 2012-13) from the General Fund to the High-Risk Communities Wildlife Mitigation Grant Program Fund (which is created by the bill). Money in the fund would be continuously appropriated to the forest service, which may only use the funds for wildfire mitigation grants.

For these reasons the Colorado State Fire Chiefs' Association encourages and would appreciate your favorable consideration of SB09-018.