



WESTERN GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION

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March 19, 2015

Honorable Mike Enzi
Chairman
Senate Committee on the Budget
624 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Bernard Sanders
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on the Budget
624 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Tom Price
Chairman
House Committee on the Budget
207 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Chris Van Hollen
Ranking Member
House Committee on the Budget
134 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Enzi, Ranking Member Sanders, Chairman Price and Ranking Member Van Hollen:

Western Governors support Congressional efforts to end the so-called "fire borrowing" practice used by the U.S. Forest Service and the Department of the Interior to fund their wildfire suppression activities.

The history of this matter is well-documented, as restoration and prevention work in western forests has been negatively impacted by "fire borrowing" for years. We recognize that Congress is also responsible for maintaining process controls to ensure a responsible use of taxpayer dollars. Western Governors also understand the budgetary challenges posed by wildfire funding and the need for agency accountability.

We also assert that changes are needed, as the current funding situation has allowed severe wildfires to burn through crippling amounts of the very funds that should instead be used to prevent and reduce wildfire impacts and costs. This represents an unacceptable set of outcomes for taxpayers, at-risk communities, and responsible stewardship of federal land.

We are encouraged that bipartisan legislation, including the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act (S. 235, H.R. 167), has been proposed to address this important issue. This legislation would solve the budgetary issue by creating a funding structure similar to that used by other federal agencies, such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency, when responding to natural disasters.

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Western Governors appreciate the opportunity to work constructively with you on ways to improve the current funding structure while addressing the challenges of wildfire mitigation and suppression.

Thank you for your consideration of our views, especially as preparations for the 2015 fire season get under way.

Sincerely,



Brian Sandoval
Governor, State of Nevada
Chairman, WGA

cc:

Honorable Thad Cochran, Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations
Honorable Barbara Mikulski, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Appropriations
Honorable Hal Rogers, Chairman, House Committee on Appropriations
Honorable Nita Lowey, Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations
Honorable Mike Crapo
Honorable Ron Wyden
Honorable Mike Simpson
Honorable Kurt Schrader