



WESTERN FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

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Dear House Members,

On behalf of the Western Fire Chiefs Association (WFCA), we appreciate and applaud Chairman Bruce Westerman and Congressman Jared Golden for introducing the Standardizing Permitting and Expediting Economic Development (SPEED) Act.

The SPEED Act amends NEPA to promote efficiencies in the permitting process. The bill incorporates key pieces of the Supreme Court's decision in *Seven County Infrastructure Coalition v. Eagle County, Colorado* to provide more clarity for agencies preparing environmental documents and courts reviewing NEPA claims.

The WFCA represents the 10 western states and Pacific Islands where most wildfires occur. These wildfires can best be mitigated via proactive fuels management by biomass utilization, timber harvesting, prescribe burns and mechanical treatment. By investing in proactive fuels treatments, we can greatly decrease life, property, economic and environmental losses. Many of these fuel treatments require NEPA processes, which currently delay timely projects.

This legislation does not eliminate NEPA, it simply streamlines the overall process so proactive steps can help reduce suppression efforts and post fire costs. These NEPA revisions were contained within the Congressional Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission's 2023 report. The urgency and scale of this crisis demands actions to offset the backlog of needed fuel treatment work.

We appreciate your thorough consideration of this legislation and welcome the opportunity to discuss it further with you.

Sincerely,

Mark Niemeyer, President