



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE FORESTERS

444 North Capitol Street NW | Suite 387 | Washington, DC 20001 | www.stateforesters.org

March 22, 2023

The Honorable Tom Tiffany, Chair
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Federal Lands
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Joe Neguse, Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Federal Lands
1332 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Tiffany and Ranking Member Neguse,

The National Association of State Foresters (NASF) writes to you today in support of the bipartisan effort led by Representatives LaMalfa (R-CA) and Panetta (D-CA) to introduce H.R. 1586, *the Forest Protection and Wildland Firefighter Safety Act of 2023*.

NASF represents the directors of the forestry agencies in all 50 states, five U.S. territories, three nations in compacts of free association with the U.S., and the District of Columbia. State foresters deliver technical and financial assistance to private landowners, along with protection of forest health and water resources for more than two-thirds of the nation's forests, as well as promote the stewardship of urban and community forests of all sizes across the country. We also partner with federal land management agencies through cooperative agreements and Good Neighbor Authority to manage national forests and to deliver programs outlined in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act such as the recently announced Community Wildfire Defense Grants. While the duties of state agencies vary from state to state, all share common forest management and protection missions and most have statutory responsibilities to provide wildland fire protection on all lands, public and private.

In 2022, roughly 70,000 wildland fires burned more than 7.5 million acres.¹ State and local agencies respond to the majority of wildfires across the country; in 2022 state and local agencies were responsible for responding to 57,492 (83%) of the 69,988 reported wildfires across all jurisdictions.² State forestry agencies contribute a significant portion of the overall wildland fire suppression effort nationally in terms of resources, personnel, capacity, and funds.

¹ National Interagency Fire Center, Historical Wildland Fire Summaries, Last accessed March 14, 2023 at <https://www.nifc.gov/fire-information/statistics/wildfires>

² *Id.*

Executive Director
Jay Farrell

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Attacking wildfires when they are small is the key to reducing fatalities, injuries, loss of homes, and cutting federal, state and local fire-fighting costs. This national principle is extremely important to state foresters that are responsible for protecting over 60% of the nations' forests. Often the use of fire retardants and/or foam is the only practical way to reduce wildfire intensities and rate of spread until units on the ground can safely take suppression action. Continuing the use of fire retardants and/or foam is essential for firefighter and public safety. In some instances, it is the only tool that will allow firefighters to accomplish the job safely.

Eliminating this tool from the toolbox will severely reduce the efficacy of interagency suppression capabilities and will accelerate risk to the public. Adequate protection of communities, life and property, and critical infrastructure such as major communication and power line facilities through continued aerial application of fire retardant is a critical need that should continue to be recognized.

State and federal agencies rely on aviation contracts for air tankers and helicopters that aeriaily deliver fire retardants and/or foam. If state and federal agencies are not able to utilize aeriaily delivered fire retardants and/or foam, interagency wildfire suppression efforts will be severely impacted by the loss of this valuable fire suppression tool which could significantly increase the threat and risk to life and property.

State foresters believe continuing the use of fire retardants and/or foam, in aerial fire suppression activities, is essential for firefighter and public safety.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kacey KC', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kacey KC
NASF President
Nevada State Forester