

**First Regular Session
Seventy-first General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO**

INTRODUCED

LLS NO. M17-0115.01 Cara Meeker x2044

SJM17-001

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

Jones and Merrifield,

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

Hamner and Thurlow,

Senate Committees

Agriculture, Natural Resources, & Energy

House Committees

SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL 17-001

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

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

4 WHEREAS, Colorado's forests are increasingly susceptible to
5 forest fires, with an average of about 40,000 acres burned per year from
6 2004 through 2007 but an average of more than 140,000 acres burned per
7 year from 2008 through 2014; and

8 WHEREAS, According to the Insurance Information Institute,
9 Colorado has the second highest percentage of households that are at high

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.
Capital letters indicate new material to be added to existing statute.
Dashes through the words indicate deletions from existing statute.

1 or extreme risk from wildfires of any state in the nation; and

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

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

12 WHEREAS, A 2013 study by Headwaters Economics showed that
13 in the 1990s, average federal spending to suppress wildfires was less than
14 \$1 billion annually, but, since 2002, federal spending has risen to over \$3
15 billion annually and costs are still rising; and

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

20 WHEREAS, Congress is currently considering several measures
21 that would create alternative ways to pay for catastrophic wildfire
22 response costs; now, therefore,

23 *Be It Resolved by the Senate of the Seventy-first General Assembly*
24 *of the State of Colorado, the House concurring herein:*

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

29 *Be It Further Resolved*, That copies of this Joint Memorial be sent
30 to Governor John Hickenlooper, each member of Colorado's
31 congressional delegation, the Western Governor's Association, Secretary
32 of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, and Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell.