

1 **CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON WILDFIRE ISSUES**

2 2017 GENERAL SESSION

3 STATE OF UTAH

4 **Chief Sponsor: Lee B. Perry**

5 Senate Sponsor: Evan J. Vickers

7 **LONG TITLE**

8 **General Description:**

9 This concurrent resolution urges Utah's congressional delegation to develop and support
10 legislation to improve the federal wildfire funding process and management of the
11 nation's forests.

12 **Highlighted Provisions:**

13 This resolution:

- 14 ▶ expresses concern regarding the current federal funding process for wildfire issues
15 and forest management; and
16 ▶ urges support for federal legislation that would improve the federal wildfire funding
17 process and management of the nation's forests.

18 **Special Clauses:**

19 None

21 *Be it resolved by the Legislature of the state of Utah, the Governor concurring therein:*

22 WHEREAS, today's fire seasons are, on average, 78 days longer than they were in the
23 1970s, and are projected to become hotter, more unpredictable, and more expensive;

24 WHEREAS, over the last few decades, the portion of the United States Forest Service's
25 budget dedicated to fire has increased from under 20% to more than 50% of the United States
26 Forest Service's total budget;

27 WHEREAS, as wildfire management consumes a significantly larger share of the
28 United States Forest Service's budget, critical funding that supports federal, state, and private
29 forests is reduced;

30 WHEREAS, compounding the issue is a practice known as "fire borrowing," which
31 occurs when the United States Forest Service takes money from nonwildfire programs to pay
32 for the current year's fire suppression needs that exceed appropriated funding;

33 WHEREAS, fire borrowing has resulted in the cancellation of forest thinning activities,
34 firefighter training, purchases of firefighting equipment, and recreation projects;

35 WHEREAS, in order to cover wildfire suppression costs in recent years, the United
36 States Forest Service has been forced to dismiss employees early, cancel contracts, and halt
37 plans to fill critical positions that conserve and protect our nation's public and private forests;

38 WHEREAS, if the nation does not have healthy and resilient forests, public benefits
39 such as clean air and water, wildlife habitat, places to recreate, and jobs are all at risk; and

40 WHEREAS, federal legislation is needed to enable more active forest management on
41 all lands, both public and private, through budget process changes and federal forest reforms,
42 including:

- 43 • a prohibition on late-season fire borrowing;
- 44 • increased funding for nonwildfire suppression programs; and
- 45 • significantly increased active, federal forest management, including
46 rewarding collaboration, streamlining the National Environmental Policy
47 Act process and expanding the use of categorical exclusions, and
48 reforestation:

49 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah, the
50 Governor concurring therein, urges Utah's congressional delegation to develop and support
51 federal legislation to improve the federal wildfire funding process and management of the
52 nation's forests.

53 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent to Utah's
54 congressional delegation, the Secretary of the United States Department of the Interior, the
55 Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture, and the Chief of the United States
56 Forest Service.