



WESTERN GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION

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September 21, 2007

The Honorable Max Baucus
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Baucus:

On behalf of the Western Governors' Association (WGA), we are writing to commend you for introducing The Stable Fire Funding Act of 2006 (S. 1770). Western Governors believe that S. 1770 is a timely piece of legislation because it is imperative we address ever increasing wild land fire suppression expenditures.

While S. 1770 provides a near-term funding solution for the Agencies' suppression costs, it does not provide a solution to the long-term budget problem. We believe the current budgeting approach for wildfires limits the ability to simultaneously prevent and prepare, as well as suppress, wild land fires. A new federal wildfire suppression funding mechanism is needed to enable critical investments in forest health, fuels management and preparedness activities that make our communities safer.

The new mechanism should include a new and separate funding mechanism, with cost containment controls, to pay for emergency suppression activities. Congress must recognize that additional investments in the United States Forest Service and the Department of the Interior budgets, separate from the emergency suppression needs, is key to the long-term budget solution.

Without these long-term budgetary changes, the proper investments cannot be made and the federal agencies will continue to incur ever-escalating suppression expenditures. Western Governors support the full implementation and funding of the National Fire Plan and the revised 10-year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan as a means toward containing these expenditures. Investing in proactive wildfire management activities as outlined in the Implementation Plan will enable the country to get out from underneath the current escalation of federal fire suppression costs. We need as much monetary attention on hazardous fuel reduction, forest restoration and perhaps most importantly, community fire assistance, as we currently put to suppression.

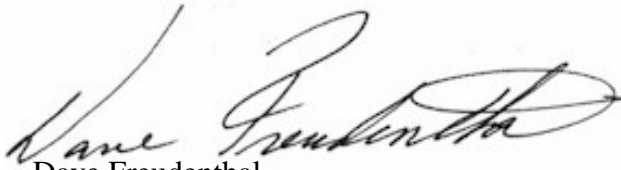
The WGA supports S. 1770 as a significant first step. We thank you for S. 1770's introduction and offer our assistance in examining solutions to the larger problem. Attached please find a briefing document on this issue by the National Association of State Foresters which may be useful.

The Honorable Max Baucus

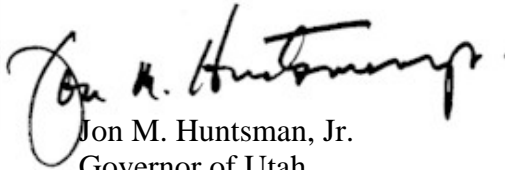
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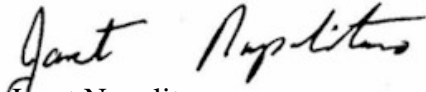
Sincerely,



Dave Freudenthal
Governor of Wyoming
WGA Chairman



Jon M. Huntsman, Jr.
Governor of Utah
WGA Vice Chairman



Janet Napolitano
Governor of Arizona
WGA Forest Health Lead

cc: The Honorable Jon Tester, Co-Sponsor

Enc: NASF Wildland Fire Suppression Costs Briefing Paper