

**Second Regular Session  
Seventieth General Assembly  
STATE OF COLORADO**

**MEMORIAL B**

LLS NO. R16-0275.01 Thomas Morris x4218

**SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL**

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**Coram and Vigil, Arndt, Becker K., Buck, Hamner, Mitsch Bush, Singer, Thurlow**

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**SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL**

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

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

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

16            WHEREAS, The United States Forest Service spent only 16% of  
17 its annual budget on fire suppression and response in 1995, but recently  
18 announced that in 2015, for the first time, it will spend more than half its

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 budget to fight wildfires, and by 2025 it expects to spend 67% of its  
2 budget on that task; and

3 WHEREAS, A 2013 study by Headwaters Economics showed that  
4 in the 1990s, average federal spending to suppress wildfires was less than  
5 \$1 billion annually, but since 2002, federal spending has risen to over \$3  
6 billion annually and costs are still rising; and

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

11 WHEREAS, Congress is currently considering several measures  
12 that would create alternative ways to pay for catastrophic wildfire  
13 response costs; and

14 WHEREAS, The General Assembly's Water Resources Review  
15 Committee and Wildfire Matters Review Committee have approved this  
16 Joint Resolution [Memorial]; now, therefore,

17 *Be It Resolved by the Senate of the Seventieth General Assembly*  
18 *of the State of Colorado, the House concurring herein:*

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

23 *Be It Further Resolved*, That a copy of this Joint Memorial be  
24 provided to Colorado's congressional delegation, Governor John  
25 Hickenlooper, the Western Governors' Association, Secretary of  
26 Agriculture Tom Vilsack, and Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell.