

# COUNTY OF EL DORADO

330 Fair Lane  
Placerville, CA 95667  
(530) 621-5390  
(530) 622-3645 Fax

SUZANNE ALLEN DE SANCHEZ  
Clerk of the Board



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February 11, 2012

The Honorable Jerry Brown  
Governor, State of California  
State Capitol, Suite 1173  
Sacramento, CA 95814

## Re: Request to Maintain Budget Support for CalFire at Lake Tahoe

Dear Governor Brown:

We are writing to request that you reinstate funding for CalFire at Lake Tahoe.

In your proposed 2012-2013 budget, you propose to eliminate \$2.3 million in general fund support for the two CalFire engines and crews that have been stationed in the Tahoe Basin since the devastating Angora Fire in 2007. This wind-whipped wildland fire damaged or destroyed more than 250 homes and 3100 acres of land within El Dorado County at the Lake. In addition to the tragic impact on environmental and watershed values, this fire triggered a significant loss in the value of property and property tax revenues to El Dorado County, local agencies, and the State of California.

Your proposal is contrary to the findings and recommendations set forth in the historic ***Emergency California-Nevada Tahoe Basin Fire Commission Report***, published in May 2008. In particular, we respectfully request that you and your staff review Finding 37 on page 63 of the report, where it states:

*"The level of wildland fire protection on the California side of the Basin in "State Responsibility Areas" is below the basic 24/7 all-risk standard experienced elsewhere in California." The finding goes on to say: "As a result of the "balance of areas" arrangement between state and federal fire protection agencies in California, property owners on the California side of the Tahoe Basin receive services at a level which is lower than the standard elsewhere in California. In other areas of California, property owners in "State Responsibility Areas" receive 24/7 all-risk protection by the state's fire department, CAL FIRE. In many cases where there is an organized local fire protection district, the local and state agencies cooperate in delivering programs, including fire prevention and multi-hazard fire and rescue services. The lead on multi-hazard structure fire and rescue services comes from local government, while wildland fire protection comes from CAL FIRE. In many cases, the local government's ability to provide statutory mandated services is constrained by the shift of property tax dollars to the State of California. This leaves a reduced ability for local government to participate in 24/7 wildland fire protection."*

There is also an important element of fairness involved in this issue. Your proposal comes at the same time the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection is moving forward with approved

plans to implement a new fee on the owners of homes and other structures within “State Responsibility Areas” (SRA). If your budget proposal is adopted, the significant number of property owners within SRAs at Lake Tahoe will be paying new fees to the State for what will be a reduced level of service.

Please take steps to restore the State’s general fund support for CalFire at Lake Tahoe. An even better solution would be for the State to accept and support Direct Protection Responsibility (DPA) for SRAs within the Tahoe Basin and provide the same 24/7 all risk fire services provided elsewhere in the State.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and action in support of this request.

Sincerely,

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John R. Knight, Chair  
Board of Supervisors  
County of El Dorado