

COUNTY OF EL DORADO

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

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March 26, 2013

The Honorable Fran Pavley, Chair
Senate Natural Resources and Water
State Capitol, Room 4035
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Support for Senate Bill 17

Dear Senator Pavley:

The Board of Supervisors for the County of El Dorado supports Senate Bill 17 by Senator Gaines to repeal the Fire Prevention Fee in State Responsibility Areas (SRA).

Although El Dorado County is the 29th largest county in terms of population, we are the 4th largest in terms of fire fee bills due to the size of the State Responsibility Area. It is our understanding that over 51,000 fire fee bills were sent to El Dorado County property owners. Assuming most property owners receive the \$35 dollar credit for paying taxes to a local fire protection district, this represents nearly \$6.9 million that El Dorado County residents are now paying to the State of California each year with negligible benefit.

The Legislature has significantly underestimated the devastating effect the fire fee will inevitably have on local fire protection agencies. Rural fire protection districts provide all-hazard emergency response, and are often the first responders to wildfire incidents. In addition to ad valorem property taxes, most rural property owners in the County of El Dorado also pay a voter-approved special tax and/or fire suppression assessment. Despite this revenue, with increasing personnel, training and equipment costs local fire protection districts are on the brink of financial deterioration. The new fire prevention fee all but guarantees that local fire districts will never again achieve voter or landowner approval for new special taxes or assessments. The true consequence of this will be the complete dissolution of rural fire protection districts, which will in turn increase risk and further strain Cal Fire resources. This complex interplay between state and local fire protection efforts deserves detailed analysis.

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 17. Should you or your staff have any questions about this matter, please contact Chief Administrative Officer Terri Daly at (530) 621-5530.

Sincerely,

Ron Briggs, Chair
Board of Supervisors
County of El Dorado

cc: Senator Anthony Cannella, Vice Chair, Senate Natural Resources and Water
Senator Ted Gaines
Assembly Member Beth Gaines
Assembly Member Frank Bigelow