

WILDFIRE RESPONSE AND DROUGHT RESILIENCY ACT

Climate change, a century of fire suppression, and a growing number of people living and recreating within the wildland-urban interface have all contributed to increased wildfire risk nationally. Wildfires are now a year-round threat, burning larger areas with greater intensity. Climate change has also made drought more severe and persistent, with parts of the western United States experiencing their driest conditions in over 1,200 years. Together, the effects of wildfire and drought cost the United States roughly \$20 billion in 2021 alone.

H.R. 5118, the Wildfire Response and Drought Resiliency Act (WRDR Act), led by Rep. Joe Neguse (D-Colo.), is a package of 49 bills that will provide much-needed investments to improve fire-adapted ecosystems, protect communities against catastrophic wildfires, enhance drought resiliency, expand science programs, modernize data and technology, and ensure a whole-of-government approach to wildfire and drought issues. A summary of the bill is available [here](#).

TO IMPROVE WILDFIRE RESPONSE, THE WRDR ACT

- Establishes new hiring authorities and a minimum basic pay rate (approximately \$20/hour) for wildland firefighters, as well as mental health leave and hazard pay.
- Authorizes a 10-Year National Wildfire Response Plan for landscape-scale projects across the country.
- Provides tools and resources to assist communities' wildfire activities, including prescribed fires, and supports opportunities for Tribes and Conservation Corps in wildfire activities.

TO IMPROVE DROUGHT RESILIENCY, THE WRDR ACT

- Provides \$500 million to prevent key reservoirs of the Colorado River from declining to unsafe levels.
- Invests in innovative drought-proof water infrastructure, including water recycling and desalination projects.
- Secures water reliability for Indian Country, by advancing tribal water rights settlements, investing \$1 billion in tribal clean water access, and supporting technical assistance for tribal water needs.
- Supports the development of modern water management data and technology.
- Protects and restores important ecosystems and wildlife populations that have been impacted by drought and climate change.

TO ENSURE A COMPREHENSIVE, WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT APPROACH TO WILDFIRE AND DROUGHT, THE WRDR ACT

- Improves wildfire-related programs at the Department of Energy, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Fire Administration and provides improved assistance and relief for communities that have been impacted by recent wildfires.
- Establishes the National Disaster Safety Board and directs the President to establish a National Wildland Fire Risk Reduction Program.
- Advances environmental justice for communities that have been disproportionately harmed by environmental discrimination and climate change-induced wildfire and drought.