

1 **CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON UTAH WILDFIRES**

2 2013 GENERAL SESSION

3 STATE OF UTAH

4 **Chief Sponsor: Joel K. Briscoe**

5 Senate Sponsor: Karen Mayne

6

7 **LONG TITLE**

8 **General Description:**

9 This concurrent resolution of the Legislature and the Governor expresses appreciation
10 to the many dedicated individuals from state, federal, and local agencies, and
11 volunteers, for helping to combat the state's many wildfires during the 2012 wildland
12 fire season.

13 **Highlighted Provisions:**

14 This resolution:

15 ▶ expresses deep appreciation to the many dedicated individuals from state, federal,
16 and local agencies, and volunteers, who responded to the wildfires that raged across
17 the state during the 2012 wildland fire season; and

18 ▶ expresses appreciation to the many individuals who willingly put themselves in
19 harm's way to protect their neighbors.

20 **Special Clauses:**

21 None

22

23 *Be it resolved by the Legislature of the state of Utah, the Governor concurring therein:*

24 WHEREAS, Utah's 2012 wildland fire season, with 1,528 fires, was more devastating
25 than any other season on record;

26 WHEREAS, lower than average snowpack and a dry spring resulted in unseasonably
27 early fire conditions;



28 WHEREAS, by the time the official fire season started, Utah was experiencing the
29 driest May and June in 30 years and fire indices were at record levels;

30 WHEREAS, fire restrictions were put in place by the first of June, and fire activity
31 began early and peaked in late June and early July;

32 WHEREAS, during a single two-week period, Utah averaged one large fire every other
33 day;

34 WHEREAS, a strong monsoonal flow in the latter half of July put an end to the extreme
35 conditions, and activity slowed significantly in the later part of the summer;

36 WHEREAS, 50% of Utah's wildland fires during the 2012 wildland fire season were
37 caused by lightning, and 50% were human caused, including 33 that were caused by target
38 shooting;

39 WHEREAS, 10% of the fires were caused by equipment, 7% by debris burning, and 6%
40 by campfires;

41 WHEREAS, Utah's wildfires burned 413,626 acres, including 81,624 private acres,
42 279,521 federal acres, and 52,481 state acres;

43 WHEREAS, the number of acres burned was well above the ten-year average;

44 WHEREAS, Utah experienced a record number of large fires, and a higher than average
45 number of those fires occurred on state and private lands;

46 WHEREAS, a record number of structures was lost to fire damage;

47 WHEREAS, considering the extreme level of fire activity and the thousands of hours
48 spent working on the fires, the safety record was remarkable;

49 WHEREAS, 88% of wildfire starts were extinguished by local fire departments before
50 they reached catastrophic size;

51 WHEREAS, unfortunately, two aerial firefighters were killed when the air tanker they
52 were flying in crashed near the White Rock Fire, three volunteer firefighters were seriously
53 injured during the initial attack phase of the Clay Springs Fire, and one resident was killed in
54 the Wood Hollow fire after refusing to evacuate;

55 WHEREAS, costs to the state for fire suppression have been estimated at \$16 million;

56 WHEREAS, Utah received five Fire Management Assistance Grants through the
57 Federal Emergency Management Agency;

58 WHEREAS, Utah's major fires in 2012 include Dump, which burned 5,507 acres from

59 June 21 to June 25; Wood Hollow, which burned 48,986 acres from June 27 to July 19; Church
60 Camp, which burned 7,217 acres from June 24 to July 18; Seeley, which burned 40,385 acres
61 from June 26 to July 19; Clay Springs, which burned 108,846 acres from June 27 to July 24;
62 Wolf Den, which burned 19,865 acres from June 29 to July 25; Rose Crest, which burned 612
63 acres from June 30 to July 3; Shingle, which burned 8,061 acres from July 1 to July 15; Quail,
64 which burned 2,222 acres from July 3 to July 9; and Pinyon, which burned 2,959 acres from
65 August 5 to August 13;

66 WHEREAS, several of last summer's large fires, including New Harmony, Church
67 Camp, and Wood Hollow, were less severe due to hazardous fuels reduction projects;

68 WHEREAS, dozens of homes and outbuildings survived these fires as a result of the
69 mitigation work done by the Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands;

70 WHEREAS, Utah, along with local and federal cooperators, continues to modify
71 vegetation across the state to increase the probability of home survival during a wildfire;

72 WHEREAS, the Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands was able to secure
73 approximately \$2.5 million from federal sources in 2012 to continue hazardous fuels mitigation
74 efforts on private property across the landscapes of Utah;

75 WHEREAS, the division also completed project work on more than 40 properties as a
76 direct result of this grant funding;

77 WHEREAS, a total of 2,058 acres was treated for reduction of hazardous fuels and
78 revegetation in 2012, and a total of 33,925 acres have been treated since 2001;

79 WHEREAS, despite the busy fire season, the division was able to assist communities in
80 increasing their firefighting capacity and improving safety and effectiveness;

81 WHEREAS, the division awarded \$770,187 in grant funds to 83 Utah fire departments
82 for training, equipment, and personal protective equipment, certified more than 2,300 Utah
83 structural firefighters to fight wildland fire, sponsored five wildland engine workshops for Utah
84 fire departments that trained approximately 500 volunteer firefighters, and placed 20
85 firefighting apparatus with Utah fire departments;

86 WHEREAS, wildland firefighters included individuals from the Utah Department of
87 Natural Resources, the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs, the United States Bureau of
88 Land Management, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the United States Forest
89 Service, the National Park Service, and numerous local fire departments representing counties,

90 districts, cities, and towns throughout Utah; and

91 WHEREAS, the dedication and resolve of state and local responders to the 2012
92 wildland fires helped to preserve life and minimize property damage across the state:

93 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah, the
94 Governor concurring therein, express deep appreciation to the many dedicated individuals from
95 state, federal, and local agencies, and volunteers who responded to the fires that raged across
96 the state during the 2012 wildland fire season.

97 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor express
98 appreciation to the many individuals who willingly put themselves in harm's way to protect
99 their neighbors.

100 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent to the Utah
101 Division of Forestry, Fires and State Lands, the Utah Association of Counties, and the Utah
102 League of Cities and Towns.

Legislative Review Note
as of 2-4-13 6:14 PM

Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel