

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 18

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY THE SENATE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Introduced: 4/2/25

Referred: Resources

A RESOLUTION

1 **Urging the Governor, the Department of Natural Resources, division of forestry and fire**
2 **protection, the Department of Public Safety, municipalities of the state and relevant**
3 **wildfire planning and response agencies, and the Alaska delegation in Congress to**
4 **prepare for the 2025 wildfire season.**

5 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

6 **WHEREAS** the frequency and severity of wildfires in the state is increasing because
7 of the effects of lower precipitation and rising temperatures, leading to prolonged fire seasons;
8 and

9 **WHEREAS** the 2025 wildfire season presents an immediate and severe risk to
10 communities in wildland-urban interface areas, including Anchorage, Fairbanks, Kenai,
11 Soldotna, and other high-risk zones across the state, some of which have never experienced
12 wildfires and which contain dangerous fuel loads; and

13 **WHEREAS** the National Weather Service projects below-average precipitation levels
14 and continued dry conditions in regions of the state, exacerbating fire danger and making
15 proactive mitigation efforts critical; and

1 **WHEREAS** limited water sources, difficult terrain, and constrained or single-access
2 routes to large residential areas in many communities pose significant challenges to ground-
3 based firefighting and evacuation efforts; and

4 **WHEREAS** the costs of fighting a widespread fire increase significantly when crews
5 must be brought in from out of state, and providing quick, effective, locally sourced fire
6 suppression reduces costs for firefighting and reduces economic losses caused by a fire; and

7 **WHEREAS** there is a demonstrated need for improved aerial firefighting resources,
8 additional water reservoirs for bucket operations, and enhanced early detection of wildfires
9 and warning systems to support rapid response; and

10 **WHEREAS** community safety and preparedness depend on early and effective public
11 outreach, which could include expansion of public education programs like the Ready, Set,
12 Go! Program, engaging residents in annual inspections and preparation through a program
13 like Firewise USA, coordinating neighborhood evacuation planning and drills with local fire
14 stations, and other interagency coordination efforts; and

15 **WHEREAS** the role of local and state public information officers, in collaboration
16 with state and federal agencies, is to actively coordinate public education campaigns, enhance
17 emergency notifications, and facilitate communication between fire response agencies and the
18 public; and

19 **WHEREAS** past legislative efforts have underscored the importance of wildfire
20 mitigation funding, including appropriations granted for wildfire fuel reduction programs,
21 defensible space and fuel break initiatives, and support for local fire departments in high-risk
22 areas;

23 **BE IT RESOLVED** that, in preparation for the 2025 wildfire season, the Alaska State
24 Legislature urges the Governor, the Department of Natural Resources, division of forestry and
25 fire protection, and relevant municipal and local agencies to enhance wildfire preparedness
26 and response coordination by reviewing and developing comprehensive interagency wildfire
27 response plans specific to high-risk wildland-urban interface communities; conducting full
28 reviews of available response equipment, joint response agreements, and water resources;
29 identifying opportunities for additional water storage and access points; and inspecting and
30 treating aircraft landing zones and roadways, especially those that are single-access routes to
31 large residential populations, to minimize hazard trees, reduce sources of fuel for wildfires,

1 including fuel in rights-of-way, clear road and intersection obstructions, and repair roads that
2 are in poor condition to enable use of the roadways to support wildfire response and safe
3 evacuations; and be it

4 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that, in preparation for the 2025 wildfire season, the Alaska
5 State Legislature urges the Governor, the Department of Natural Resources, division of
6 forestry and fire protection, and relevant municipal and local agencies to expand public
7 outreach and education by implementing a statewide public awareness campaign on wildfire
8 risks and prevention strategies, which may include engaging residents and local fire
9 departments in a program like Firewise USA, inspections, and evacuation preparedness; and
10 promoting wildfire preparedness by launching an early detection campaign, promoting the
11 Ready, Set, Go! Program, and enhancing local notification and emergency news sources; and
12 be it

13 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that, in preparation for the 2025 wildfire season, the Alaska
14 State Legislature urges the Governor, the Department of Natural Resources, division of
15 forestry and fire protection, and relevant municipal and local agencies to conduct emergency
16 response and evacuation drills by organizing and funding multi-agency tabletop exercises and
17 live wildfire evacuation drills before May 1, 2025; and to model evacuation scenarios,
18 including planning for the possibility of single-access road closures, emergency vehicle
19 congestion, and multiple fires resulting from ember transport downwind; and be it

20 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that, in preparation for the 2025 wildfire season, the Alaska
21 State Legislature urges the Governor, the Department of Natural Resources, division of
22 forestry and fire protection, and relevant municipal and local agencies to bolster fire
23 suppression resources by securing additional ground and aerial firefighting assets and
24 stationing those assets close to high-risk areas during peak fire seasons; establishing new
25 water reservoirs and enhancing access to existing water sources for bucket and hose
26 operations in areas with limited local water supplies; and be it

27 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that, in preparation for the 2025 wildfire season, the Alaska
28 State Legislature urges the Governor, the Department of Natural Resources division of
29 forestry and fire protection, and relevant municipal and local agencies to improve fire
30 detection and early warning systems by implementing advanced fire detection technology to
31 improve response times and situational awareness and conducting community-wide tests of

1 emergency notification systems to ensure reliability in crisis situations; and be it

2 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges federal
3 representatives, including the Alaska delegation in Congress, to advocate for increased federal
4 funding and support for the state's wildfire prevention and mitigation efforts.

5 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Michael Dunleavy,
6 Governor of the State of Alaska; the Honorable John Boyle, Commissioner, Department of
7 Natural Resources; the Honorable James Cockrell, Commissioner, Department of Public
8 Safety; the Honorable Suzanne LaFrance, Mayor of the Municipality of Anchorage; the
9 Honorable Glenda D. Ledford, Mayor of the City of Wasilla; the Honorable Steve Carrington,
10 Mayor of the City of Palmer; the Honorable David Pruhs, Mayor of the City of Fairbanks; the
11 Honorable Grier Hopkins, Mayor of the Fairbanks North Star Borough; the Honorable Brian
12 Gabriel, Mayor of the City of Kenai; the Honorable Paul Whitney, Mayor of the City of
13 Soldotna; the Honorable Peter Micciche, Mayor of the Kenai Peninsula Borough; Doug
14 Schrage, Fire Chief, Anchorage Fire Department; Chad VanOrmer, Regional Forester, Alaska
15 Region, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture; and the Honorable Lisa Murkowski
16 and the Honorable Dan Sullivan, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Nicholas Begich, U.S.
17 Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.