

Minority Report
Conference Committee to SB1202
forestry and fire management; conformity
March 30, 2017

We oppose SB1202 forestry and fire management; conformity as amended in conference committee because the conference committee amendment undermines safe wildfire management and unnecessarily risks the health and safety of wildfire responders, residents, and even the private contractors working to suppress wildfires.

The conference committee amendment fails to adequately address the potential disruption to the current wildfire management command structure created by the presence of private contractors and wildfire responders battling the same wildfire. SB1215 insurance; forms; fire protection services, signed by Governor Ducey on March 24, invites private contractors to operate within a wildfire management area for a private property owner at the same time that firefighters battle a wildfire under the direction of an appointed incident commander. As passed by the House of Representatives, by a vote of 56 to 1, SB1202 would have incorporated these private contractors into the state's incident command structure. This coordination is the best way to protect the health and safety of those contractors and all persons within a wildfire management area. At a minimum, this bill should require private contractors notify to an incident commander of their presence in a wildfire management area.

The conference committee amendment is a step in the wrong direction. With fire season in Arizona rapidly approaching, now is the best time to ensure the safety of everyone who responds to wildfires. SB1202, as passed by the House, did just that. The conference committee amendment takes a wait-and-see approach that could risk the lives of wildfire responders throughout Arizona.

We look forward to a robust stakeholder process to address the concerns of firefighters and property owners, but feel strongly that such a process should occur before the language in this amendment is passed into law.

For these reasons, we oppose SB1202 as amended by the conference committee.

Representative Kirsten Engel

Senator Lisa Otondo