

Regional Wildfire Prevention Legislation is Needed

- 1) Wildfires throughout California have increased in number and severity in recent years. The toll on human lives and property is staggering.
- 2) In many cases, firefighters have been unable to stop wildfires from spreading. The combination of winds and fuel loads have made management of wildland fires all but impossible.
- 3) In addition to fighting fires, we must focus on prevention: vegetation management to reduce fuel loads and reduce the spread of wildland fires, home hardening to keep structures as safe as possible, evacuation routes and procedures so that people can escape when necessary and public education to increase understanding of the wildfire problem and ways to address it.
- 4) Wildfires do not respect political jurisdiction lines. Local governments must coordinate their efforts to prevent wildfires. Today local jurisdictions acting alone do not have the resources or the expertise they need.
- 5) We all know from our experience working with local officials that more is needed. In the legislative session just concluded Assemblyman Jim Wood introduced AB 38 to take a regional approach.
- 6) Before the bill was amended to remove this language, it established 18 regional wildfire prevention districts throughout the state. The districts correspond to the areas in which wildland fires are likely to occur so that prevention can be most effective. They would have advised a new State Wildfire Prevention Board.
- 7) The Board and the districts would have had the financial resources in the form of grants to enable wildfire prevention plans to be both drawn up and implemented region-wide.
- 8) These agencies would have had the expertise needed so that the plans are based on good fire science and their implementation would reflect our best thinking on how the danger of wildfire can be minimized.
- 9) New ideas take time to catch on in Sacramento, While this approach did not make it through the legislative process this year, we are building a statewide base for next time. But we need your help.
- 10) Can we count on you to work with your local officials and your State Senator and Assemblymember to support a regional approach when AB 38 or a new bill is introduced in December? If you give me your email, I can send you a copy of Section 2 of AB 38 from this session.

