

June 21, 2011



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The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr.
Governor, State of California
State Capitol, First Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Assembly Bill 29X (Blumenfield) – State Responsibility Area Fees
Request for VETO**

Dear Governor Brown:

On behalf of the California State Association of Counties (CSAC), I write to respectfully request your veto of ABX1 29, by Assembly Member Blumenfield. This bill, adopted as part of a budget package, would impose an annual \$150 fire prevention fee on structures located in the State Responsibility Areas (SRA).

Counties understand the dire fiscal situation the State finds itself in, and are committed to working with the Legislature and the Administration to help craft a balanced budget solution that allows for more efficient and effective delivery of services to our mutual constituencies. Unfortunately, we believe that the SRA fee, proposed by ABX1 29, is a flawed approach to address CAL FIRE's funding needs.

In addition to having concerns with the administrative and timing aspects of the proposed fee, we are also concerned with the potential impact on community support for funding locally provided fire protection and prevention services. Many landowners have already agreed to assess themselves for the purposes of fire protection/prevention. This new fee would result in double taxation without any additional benefit, and would make the probability of passing a new or additional local assessment for fire protection/prevention services within the SRA slim to none.

Additionally, CSAC is concerned with the impact of the SRA fee on the State's comprehensive mutual aid system. Through these agreements the various local, state, and federal departments are often cooperative partners in responding to a wide range of emergencies. Counties believe that once the State imposes an SRA fee and we begin to account for "who pays", we begin to jeopardize these vital agreements.

Lastly, this proposal has been attempted several times in the past and a variation was enacted in 2003, only to be repealed by the Legislature due to a number of administrative and legal issues.

Counties understand the need to relieve pressure from the State's General Fund. However, SRA fees have longstanding issues that only present additional legal and administrative challenges to the State. It is for these reasons, that we respectfully request your veto of ABX1 29.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul McIntosh".

Paul McIntosh
CSAC Executive Director

cc: Assembly Member Robert Blumenfield
Ms. Ana Mantosantos, Director of the Department of Finance
Chief Ken Pimlott, Acting Director of CAL FIRE