



## WESTERN GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION

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August 27, 2015

Honorable Ryan Zinke  
United States House of Representatives  
113 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Kurt Schrader  
United States House of Representatives  
2431 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Zinke and Congressman Schrader:

We write in support of your bipartisan legislation – the Electricity Reliability and Forest Protection Act (H.R. 2358) – intended to ensure reliable electricity service and reduce the risk of fires and fire hazards caused by inadequate vegetation management in power line rights-of-way on federally managed public lands.

One of our forest management priorities is fire prevention, particularly as we enter wildfire season. Reliability of the region's electrical transmission grid is also a critical interest.<sup>1</sup> This legislation would play an important role in both.

Western Governors support key aspects of the federal land management and utility applications of the bill as it applies to federal land management.

- Minimizing the need for case-by-case or annual approvals of routine vegetation management;
- Providing utilities the authority to control dangerous trees within or adjacent to electrical transmission and distribution rights-of-way;
- Mandating vegetation management and facility inspection along with operation and maintenance rights-of-way plans be developed in coordination with the right-of-way holder;
- Ensuring a prompt review of plans; and
- Requiring the relevant federal agency apply a National Environmental Policy Act categorical exclusion to plans developed in accordance with the Electricity Reliability and Forest Protection Act.

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<sup>1</sup> Western Governors' Association (WGA) Policy Resolution 13-03: Wildland Fire Management and Resilient Landscapes and the 2013 WGA *Ten-Year Energy Vision* further elaborate on these priorities.

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Thank you for advancing this important legislation. It would provide important tools for improving forest health and electrical reliability.

Respectfully,



Matthew H. Mead  
Governor of Wyoming  
Chairman, WGA



Steve Bullock  
Governor of Montana  
Vice Chair, WGA

cc:       Congressman Tom Cole  
          Congressman Paul Gosar  
          Congressman Brett Guthrie  
          Congressman Walter B. Jones  
          Congressman Ron Kind  
          Congresswoman Ann Kirkpatrick  
          Congressman John Kline  
          Congresswoman Cynthia Lummis  
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          Congressman Mike Pompeo  
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          Congressman Don Young