



ALASKA FIRE CHIEF'S ASSOCIATION

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February 27, 2018

Representative David Guttenberg
State Capitol Room 501
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Rep. Guttenberg,

I am writing on behalf of the Alaska Fire Chiefs Association in support of House Bill 355, "An Act relating to the crime of criminally negligent burning; relating to protection of and fire management on forested land; relating to prohibited acts and penalties for prohibited acts on forested land; and providing for an effective date."

Each summer Alaskans face the danger of wildfires in their local communities. Each year the fire season is starting earlier, making the fire season longer, allowing wildfires to burn longer and potentially consume additional wildland, personal and retail properties, transportation corridors, human life, and increased cost of suppression. The only hazard in not just the fire, but the smoke created by fire is creating it difficult for some to breath. In 2015 there were 69 air quality alerts issued in the State of Alaska.

HB355 looks Improve compliance with safe burning and updating outdated prevention and enforcement statutes. DOF Fire Prevention personnel would receive valuable new compliance and enforcement tools. These new tools would allow DOF personnel to:

- Provide education opportunities to improve safe open burning practices,
- Match the level of penalty to the seriousness of the offense, and in any given case, allow DOF to increase fairness to offenders by enabling a three-tiered penalty system.
- Describe appropriate violations of safe burning practices in regulation with the intent of placing minor violations on a bail forfeiture schedule to make them appropriate for disposition without a court appearance.

Consequences of a human caused fire are often started in populated areas with high value properties at risk. While we cannot prevent all wildfires, HB355 looks to reduce human caused wildfires with education and penalties to match the seriousness of the offense.

HB355 has the ability to help reduce these human caused fires and protecting lives and valuable property at risk, with no additional cost to the State or the citizens of Alaska. The Alaska Fire Chief's Association support HB 355 and request the support of all legislators.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'J' followed by a horizontal line and a small loop at the end.

Jeff Tucker, President
Alaska Fire Chiefs Association