

**CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 355(JUD)**

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY THE HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

Offered: 4/4/18  
Referred: Rules

Sponsor(s): REPRESENTATIVES GUTTENBERG, Tuck

**A BILL**

**FOR AN ACT ENTITLED**

1 "An Act relating to the crime of criminally negligent burning; relating to protection of  
2 and fire management on forested land; relating to prohibited acts and penalties for  
3 prohibited acts on forested land; requiring the Alaska Supreme Court to establish a bail  
4 schedule; and providing for an effective date."

5 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

6 \* **Section 1.** AS 11.46.427(a) is amended to read:

7 (a) A person commits the crime of criminally negligent burning in the first  
8 degree if the person

9 (1) violates AS 11.46.430; and

10 (2) within the preceding 10 years, has been convicted on two separate  
11 occasions of violating

12 **(A)** AS 11.46.400 - 11.46.430;

13 **(B)** **misdemeanor crimes under AS 41.15.060 - 41.15.120;** or

14 **(C)** [AS 41.15.150 OR] a law or ordinance of this or another

1 jurisdiction with elements similar to the [THOSE] offenses in (A) or (B) of  
 2 this paragraph.

3 \* **Sec. 2.** AS 41.15.010 is amended to read:

4 **Sec. 41.15.010. Intent.** It is the intent of AS 41.15.010 - 41.15.170 to provide  
 5 protection from wildland fire and other destructive agents, commensurate with the  
 6 values at risk, on forested land that is owned privately, by the state, or by a  
 7 municipality.

8 \* **Sec. 3.** AS 41.15.040 is amended to read:

9 **Sec. 41.15.040. Right of entry to control and suppress fires.** Upon approval  
 10 by the commissioner or an authorized agent, an employee of the division of forestry  
 11 [LANDS], or of any organization authorized to prevent, control, or suppress a fire or a  
 12 destructive agent, and others assisting in the control or suppression of a fire upon  
 13 request of an officer or employee of the United States or the state may, when  
 14 responding to a wildland fire or suspected wildland fire or administering the  
 15 provisions of this chapter, [AT ANY TIME] enter upon any land, whether publicly  
 16 or privately owned, for the purpose of preventing, investigating, suppressing, or  
 17 controlling a wildland fire or a destructive agent.

18 \* **Sec. 4.** AS 41.15.040 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

19 (b) A person may not interfere with or prohibit the access authorized under (a)  
 20 of this section.

21 \* **Sec. 5.** AS 41.15.050 is amended to read:

22 **Sec. 41.15.050. Fire season.** The period from April 1 to August 31, inclusive,  
 23 of each year is designated the fire season. [THE COMMISSIONER MAY  
 24 DESIGNATE OTHER PERIODS AS FIRE SEASON.] The commissioner may, at  
 25 any time, proclaim an additional period for all or any portion of the state when  
 26 weather or other conditions require action for the protection of forested land. The  
 27 commissioner may also, at any time [DURING THE FIRE SEASON], prohibit, or  
 28 allow only by permit, the setting of fires, smoking, entry, or other use on the land,  
 29 when, in the judgment of the commissioner, the activities would unduly increase the  
 30 fire danger.

31 \* **Sec. 6.** AS 41.15.060 is amended to read:

1           **Sec. 41.15.060. Permits.** The commissioner shall, by regulation, prescribe the  
 2 conditions of and the manner for obtaining a permit **for the setting of fires, use of**  
 3 **burning devices, and other activities and uses of land that increase fire danger** [  
 4 FAILURE TO OBTAIN THE REQUIRED PERMIT, OR VIOLATION OF A  
 5 CONDITION OF THE PERMIT IS A MISDEMEANOR].

6 \* **Sec. 7.** AS 41.15.060 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

7           (b) A person may not set fires, use burning devices, or conduct other activities  
 8 or use land that increases fire danger without a permit as prescribed by the  
 9 commissioner in regulation.

10 \* **Sec. 8.** AS 41.15.070 is amended to read:

11           **Sec. 41.15.070. Disposal of burning materials.** A person **may not discard**  
 12 **any** [WHO, DURING THE FIRE SEASON, THROWS AWAY] lighted tobacco,  
 13 cigar, cigarette, match, firecracker, or other burning material on forested land [,  
 14 WHETHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE, IS GUILTY OF A MISDEMEANOR].

15 \* **Sec. 9.** AS 41.15.090 is amended to read:

16           **Sec. 41.15.090. Building or leaving fires.** A person **may not start** [WHO  
 17 BUILDS] a fire in or near **forested land** [TIMBER, BRUSH, GRASS, OR OTHER  
 18 INFLAMMABLE MATERIAL] without first clearing the ground immediately around  
 19 it free from materials that will carry fire [OR WHO LEAVES THE FIRE BEFORE  
 20 TOTALLY EXTINGUISHING IT, IS GUILTY OF A MISDEMEANOR].

21 \* **Sec. 10.** AS 41.15.090 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

22           (b) A person who starts a fire in or near forested land may not leave the fire  
 23 before totally extinguishing the fire.

24 \* **Sec. 11.** AS 41.15.100 is amended to read:

25           **Sec. 41.15.100. Setting fires without consent.** A person **may not set** [WHO  
 26 SETS] on fire **forested land** [TIMBER, BRUSH, GRASS,] or other inflammable  
 27 material located or growing on land that is not owned, possessed, or controlled by the  
 28 person, without the consent of the owner or lawful occupant of the land [, IS GUILTY  
 29 OF A MISDEMEANOR].

30 \* **Sec. 12.** AS 41.15.110 is amended to read:

31           **Sec. 41.15.110. Uncontrolled spread of fire; leaving fire unattended.** (a) A

1 person who knows of a fire or sets a fire on forested land owned, possessed, or  
 2 controlled by the person, shall exercise due care to prevent the uncontrolled spread of  
 3 the fire. [A PERSON FAILING TO EXERCISE DUE CARE WHICH RESULTS IN  
 4 SPREAD OF THE FIRE AND DAMAGE TO PROPERTY OF ANOTHER IS  
 5 GUILTY OF A MISDEMEANOR.]

6 (b) A person **shall** [WHO NEGLECTS TO] make every effort possible to  
 7 extinguish a fire the person knowingly sets on forested land **and may not leave a fire**  
 8 **unattended** [OR WHO LEAVES SUCH A FIRE UNATTENDED IS GUILTY OF A  
 9 MISDEMEANOR].

10 (c) In a criminal action brought under this section, the escape of the fire **may**  
 11 **be considered by a court as** [IS PRESUMPTIVE] evidence **that** [OF NEGLIGENCE  
 12 BY] the person responsible for starting the fire **acted knowingly** [AND UNLESS  
 13 REBUTTED IS SUFFICIENT TO SUSTAIN A CONVICTION].

14 \* **Sec. 13.** AS 41.15.120 is amended to read:

15 **Sec. 41.15.120. Failure to assist in preventing or suppressing fires.** If an  
 16 officer or employee of the United States or the state who is authorized to prevent,  
 17 **investigate,** or suppress fires requests a person to assist in the prevention or  
 18 suppression of a fire and informs the person of the officer or employee's official status,  
 19 [AND] the person **shall** [FAILS TO] assist the officer or employee [IN THE  
 20 PERFORMANCE OF DUTIES, THE PERSON IS GUILTY OF A  
 21 MISDEMEANOR].

22 \* **Sec. 14.** AS 41.15.130 is amended to read:

23 **Sec. 41.15.130. Backfires and burnouts excluded. AS 41.15.010 - 41.15.040**  
 24 **and 41.15.050 - 41.15.170** [AS 41.15.010 - 41.15.170] do not apply to the setting of  
 25 **backfires, burnouts, and other burning or clearing of land** [A BACKFIRE] under  
 26 the direction of an officer or employee of the United States or the state who is  
 27 authorized to prevent or suppress fires.

28 \* **Sec. 15.** AS 41.15.140 is repealed and reenacted to read:

29 **Sec. 41.15.140. Penalty.** Except as provided in AS 41.15.150, a person who

30 (1) knowingly violates a provision of AS 41.15.040 - 41.15.130 is  
 31 guilty of a class A misdemeanor punishable as provided in AS 12.55;

1 (2) without any culpable mental state, violates a provision of  
 2 AS 41.15.040 - 41.15.130 or a regulation adopted under AS 41.15.040 - 41.15.130 is  
 3 guilty of a violation and upon conviction is punishable by a fine under AS 12.55.

4 \* **Sec. 16.** AS 41.15.150 is repealed and reenacted to read:

5 **Sec. 41.15.150. Criminal burning of forested land in the first degree.** (a) A  
 6 person commits the crime of criminal burning of forested land in the first degree if

7 (1) the person violates AS 41.15.155; and

8 (2) the person's actions or conduct violate a provision of AS 41.15.010  
 9 - 41.15.130 or a regulation adopted under AS 41.15.010 - 41.15.130.

10 (b) Criminal burning of forested land in the first degree is a class B felony  
 11 punishable as provided in AS 12.55.

12 \* **Sec. 17.** AS 41.15 is amended by adding a new section to read:

13 **Sec. 41.15.155. Criminal burning of forested land in the second degree.** (a)

14 A person commits the crime of criminal burning of forested land in the second degree  
 15 if

16 (1) the person knowingly sets a fire;

17 (2) with criminal negligence, the person

18 (A) permits the fire to spread beyond the person's control; or

19 (B) fails to prevent the fire from spreading to forested land or  
 20 other flammable material; and

21 (3) as a result, the fire burns forested land or other flammable material  
 22 located or growing on land that is not owned, possessed, or controlled by the person.

23 (b) The crime of criminal burning of forested land in the second degree is a  
 24 class C felony punishable as provided in AS 12.55.

25 \* **Sec. 18.** AS 41.15.160 is amended to read:

26 **Sec. 41.15.160. Double damages in civil actions.** In addition to the criminal  
 27 punishment provided for by AS 11.46.400 - 11.46.450, AS 41.15.140, and 41.15.150  
 28 [AS 41.15.010 - 41.15.170], the United States, the state, a municipality, or any person  
 29 may recover in a civil action double the amount of damages sustained as a  
 30 consequence of a violation of AS 11.46.400 - 11.46.450, AS 41.15.010 - 41.15.150  
 31 [AS 41.15.010 - 41.15.170]. In a civil action brought under AS 41.15.010 - 41.15.170

1 or any other law relating to the subject matter of AS 41.15.010 - 41.15.170, the escape  
 2 of a fire is presumptive evidence of negligence by the person responsible for starting  
 3 the fire and unless rebutted is sufficient to sustain the recovery.

4 \* **Sec. 19.** AS 41.15.170 is amended by adding new paragraphs to read:

5 (5) "criminal negligence" has the meaning given in AS 11.81.900;

6 (6) "knowingly" has the meaning given in AS 11.81.900.

7 \* **Sec. 20.** AS 41.15.950(b) is amended to read:

8 (b) A person designated in (a) of this section may, when enforcing the  
 9 provisions of this chapter or a regulation adopted under this chapter,

10 (1) execute a warrant or other process issued by an officer or court of  
 11 competent jurisdiction;

12 (2) administer or take an oath, affirmation, or affidavit; [AND]

13 (3) arrest a person who violates a provision of this chapter or a  
 14 regulation adopted under this chapter; **and**

15 **(4) issue a citation to a person who violates a provision of**  
 16 **AS 41.15.010 - 41.15.170 or a regulation adopted under this chapter.**

17 \* **Sec. 21.** AS 41.15 is amended by adding a new section to read:

18 **Sec. 41.15.960. Bail schedules.** The supreme court shall establish by rule or  
 19 order a schedule of bail amounts for offenses under this chapter or under regulations  
 20 adopted under this chapter that allow the disposition of a citation without a court  
 21 appearance. The bail amount may not exceed the maximum fine authorized by law for  
 22 that offense.

23 \* **Sec. 22.** AS 41.15.080 is repealed.

24 \* **Sec. 23.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to  
 25 read:

26 TRANSITION: REGULATIONS. The Department of Natural Resources may adopt  
 27 regulations necessary to implement the changes made by this Act. The regulations take effect  
 28 under AS 44.62 (Administrative Procedure Act), but not before the effective date of the law  
 29 implemented by the regulation.

30 \* **Sec. 24.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to  
 31 read:

1           TRANSITION: SCHEDULE OF BAIL AMOUNTS. Notwithstanding AS 41.15.960,  
2 enacted by sec. 21 of this Act, the supreme court shall establish the bail schedule required  
3 under sec. 21 of this Act within 120 days after the effective date of sec. 21 of this Act.

4       \* **Sec. 25.** Sections 23 and 24 of this Act take effect immediately under AS 01.10.070(c).

5       \* **Sec. 26.** Except as provided in sec. 25 of this Act, this Act takes effect July 1, 2018.