



SEN. GEORGE RUNNER (RET.)

MEMBER
STATE BOARD OF EQUALIZATION
CALIFORNIA'S TAX BOARD

May 13, 2016

Honorable Das Williams, Chair
Assembly Committee on Natural Resources
1020 N Street, Room 164
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SENATE BILL 1136 (MORRELL) – FIRE PREVENTION FEE: ANNUAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS ▪ SUPPORT ▪

Dear Assemblymember Williams,

I am pleased to support Senate Bill 1136, which will change the annual reporting requirements for the Fire Prevention Fee. Current law requires the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection to report to the Legislature by each January 31 on the status and uses of the fund. SB 1136 would extend the reporting requirement from 2017 to 2021. The bill would also require the report to include detailed information on each program, subprogram, and element for which CAL FIRE uses revenue generated from the Fire Prevention Fee—an illegal tax passed by the Legislature in 2011.

When the “fee” was first imposed, supporters including the Governor and legislators, admitted the new levy would not add additional funds to fire suppression services; rather, CAL FIRE’s administrative costs would merely be transferred from the General Fund to rural homeowners. In the five years since the fee’s inception, it has become apparent that the annual reporting requirements are too vague. CAL FIRE currently lists most of its spending of the Fire Prevention Fee under a category entitled “fire prevention.” According to CAL FIRE, this includes education, fire engineering, defensible space inspections, and law enforcement, among other things. The listing of all spending under one category prohibits the public from receiving a clear breakdown of how the revenue generated from the fee is being spent.

I continue to oppose this illegal fire tax and strongly urge the Legislature to repeal the fee and uphold the state Constitution. That notwithstanding, Californians are required to pay \$152.33 each year and, as a taxpayer advocate, I believe it is the duty of government to inform them about how their hard-earned dollars are being used. Therefore, I urge your support of SB 1136 when it comes before your committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "G. Runner".

GEORGE RUNNER
1st District

cc: Senator Morrell
Eric Swanson, Assembly Republican Consultant