

August 10, 2011

Board of Forestry and Fire Protection
George Gentry
Executive Officer
P.O. Box 944246
Sacramento, CA. 94244-2460

Dear Sir,

I am writing this letter in response to the recent passing of State ABX1 29, the bill that established a \$150 fee on parcels in the State Responsibility Area. I have read a number of letters all written in protest of this bill and I see no point in reiterating what you may have already read. Perhaps you have already received letters written from our perspective, but if not; the Big Sur Volunteer Fire Brigade feels strongly enough about what we believe is a misguided attempt to collect fees that I had to write.

We are a small volunteer Fire Brigade with about thirty members, again, all volunteer. We provide the fire protection in our almost six hundred square mile response area. We are the initial attack on all emergency incidents in our area including fire. While we receive and appreciate the response and support from our Cal Fire neighbors, and certainly do not begrudge them any extra funding, this bill is simply not the way to go about it. We are deeply offended that we, as volunteers, would be billed for the very fire protection that we give!! The members of the Big Sur community are also very active in trying to obtain grants for fire clearing on our own. We do not need to pay a tax to someone else to try and find a grant. We do our own fire clearance on our properties!

It is our opinion that the funds you are hoping to receive from this bill will be put into the general fund and used in some other area, and will not be appropriately utilized in trying to obtain grants. If anything they should be used to pay for additional fire personnel to fill the "extra seat" in the engines and be able to respond with a four person crew.

In Monterey County where we live the Board of Supervisors is also poised to pass a policy implementing their own Fire Warden and Fuel Mitigation officer to get grants for clearing.

Our Volunteer Fire Brigade is run almost completely from donations from the residents in Big Sur and we are very concerned that, if forced to pay this "prevention fee", our donations will be negatively impacted.

We respectfully request that you reconsider this bill and take into consideration what a true hardship and injustice it is for all the many volunteer fire departments in California.

Sincerely,

Martha Karstens
Chief