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Fire Suppression Improvement Act

In light of year after year of increasingly catastrophic wildfires in the West, it has become clear that the federal government must do more to support state and local firefighters with their initial attack in order to get fires under control quickly and stave off increased spread and destruction.

The existing Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) Program is available to state, local, and tribal governments for the mitigation, management, and control of fires on publicly or privately-owned forests or grasslands that threaten such destruction as to constitute a major disaster. However, this program currently does not reimburse the pre-deployment of assets to prevent fires from growing out of control, and it does not currently allow for any flexibility in the federal cost share the way other FEMA disaster grant programs do.

What the *Fire Suppression Improvement Act* would do:

- **Pre-deployment of Local Assets:** This bill would explicitly allow for state or local governments to use FMAGs for the pre-deployment of assets and resources. These pre-deployed assets are critical to suppression of fires and are sometimes the only way to contain a fire before it gets out of hand and needs a major disaster declaration. Currently, FMAGs can only be used to reimburse expenses incurred after is it granted. This bill would simply allow for FMAGs to help state and local governments cover the cost of fighting incidents from the beginning of the high-risk event.
- **Fire Management Assistance Cost Share and Eligible Activities:** This bill would make FMAGs consistent with other FEMA disaster assistance by stating that the federal cost share of FMAGs shall be not less than 75 percent of the eligible cost of such assistance. This bill does not mandate any increase but simply allows for flexibility and increased federal assistance where necessary. As states and locals attempt to fight and contain more frequent and more dangerous fires, it is imperative that the federal government has the flexibility to meet the current crisis conditions on the ground.