

## Fixing California's Commercial Property Tax System Will Help Communities Prepare for Wildfires



### ■ California must do more to address the increasingly severe wildfires communities are facing as a result of climate change.

As a result of our rapidly changing climate, California has experienced the deadliest, largest, and most destructive wildfires in its history.<sup>1</sup> In the past five years, we've had nine of the 20 most destructive fires the state has ever had, including the Camp Fire in Butte in 2018, the Tubbs Fire in Napa and Sonoma in 2017, the Carr Fire in Shasta & Trinity in 2018, and the Thomas Fire in Santa Barbara and Ventura in 2017.<sup>2</sup>

Our annual fire season has become a year-round concern.<sup>3</sup> Our fires are now hotter, larger, and burn longer.<sup>4</sup>

Our emergency response systems are underfunded and have been stretched to their limit. Due to a lack of resources and equipment, the number of mutual aid requests that cannot be fulfilled is growing rapidly.<sup>5,6</sup> We're using funding designated to manage forests to put out fires, literally.<sup>7</sup>

Over the last two years, 21 counties have appealed to voters to raise taxes to fund firefighting, but these require a two-thirds majority and are difficult to pass.<sup>8</sup>

### ■ Prop 15—Schools & Communities First is part of the solution we need.

Proposition 15—the California Schools & Local Communities Funding Act would reclaim an estimated \$12 billion every year for schools and local communities by closing commercial property tax loopholes that corporations and wealthy investors use to avoid paying their fair share of property taxes.

Cities, counties and special districts will get up to \$7 billion each year, with schools and community colleges getting the remaining 40%. The local government share of the revenues can be used to increase fire protection services provided by cities and counties. In addition, there are many special districts across the state established for fire protection purposes. Prop 15 will provide funding directly to them.

**When Prop 15 is fully implemented, research shows that 26 counties will receive at least \$390 million in new revenue that will go directly to fire special districts, in addition to the billions to cities and counties which directly provide fire service. There are another 30 counties for which we do not have data; many of these have fire special districts that will benefit from new revenues. This means that Prop 15 is a major source of new funding for fire protection services so desperately needed across the state now.**

In a 28-county analysis conducted by Blue Sky Consulting in July 2020,<sup>9</sup> these 26 counties were found to have special districts established for the purpose of fire protection services.

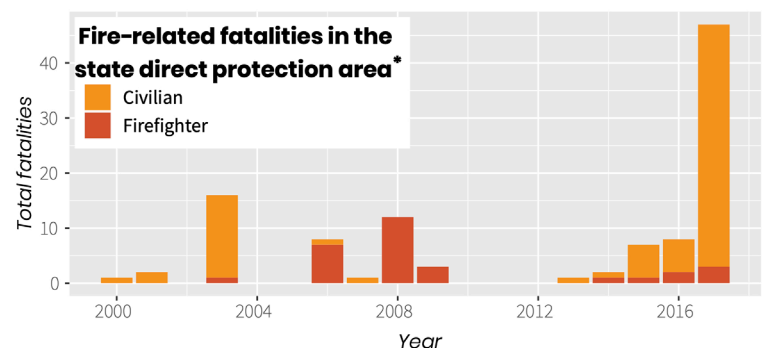
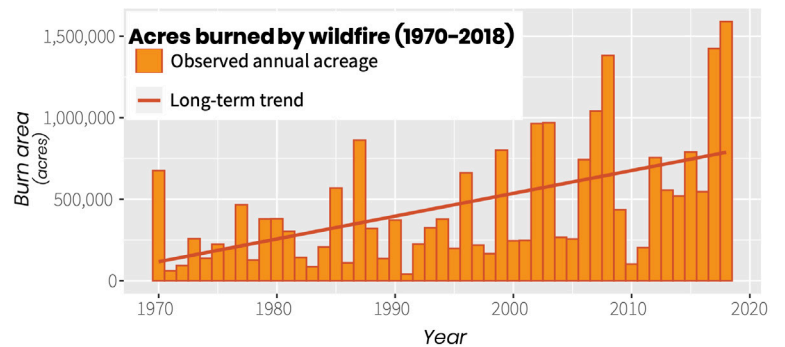
**The estimated annual revenues special fire districts will receive when Prop 15 is fully implemented are shown below.**

*These estimates do not include additional funding fire departments will get from increases in city and county budgets from Prop 15.*

Alameda	\$3,200,000
Contra Costa	\$34,800,000
El Dorado	\$500,000
Fresno	\$1,500,000
Kern	\$5,600,000
Los Angeles	\$158,000,000
Marin	\$5,600,000
Merced	\$1,200,000
Monterey	\$11,800,000
Orange	\$37,600,000
Placer	\$900,000
Riverside	\$10,700,000
Sacramento	\$12,100,000
San Bernardino	\$29,100,000
San Diego	\$3,800,000
San Joaquin	\$3,000,000
San Luis Obispo	\$200,000
San Mateo	\$26,400,000
Santa Barbara	\$6,600,000
Santa Clara	\$12,900,000
Santa Cruz	\$4,600,000
Solano	\$100,000
Sonoma	\$5,400,000
Stanislaus	\$800,000
Tulare	\$600,000
Ventura	\$13,100,000



**Direct Impacts of California Wildfires: Acreage Burned and Firefighter and Civilian Fatalities<sup>10</sup>**



The environmental crisis we face and the resulting wildfires will require growing resources. Prop 15 is an important part of a broad solution. Directly and indirectly by increasing flexible revenue to cities and counties, Prop 15 provides funding for fire protection.



*“As a veteran firefighter/fire chief and incident commander of many of California’s major fires, with more than 39 years in the fire service at both the state and local levels, I can attest to the urgent need for additional equipment, training, operational*

*planning, and personnel to keep pace with the increasing frequency and destructive intensity of California’s wildfires. Schools & Communities First (Yes on 15) provides significant new funding to help our local fire departments and special fire districts be prepared to protect life and property, and steward our natural environment through prevention strategies. When local government fire departments are properly funded, California benefits. There is no fire department prepared to handle these major incidents alone, we help each other to the best of our ability. With this funding, the state of California becomes that much stronger which benefits all Californians.”*

**KELLY ZOMBRO**, Retired Deputy Fire Chief

Learn more at: [Yes15.org](http://Yes15.org)

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- 8 Analysis of data available on local ballot measures in California at <https://ballotpedia.org/>.
- 9 Blue Sky Consulting Group, “Allocation of Revenues from Schools and Communities First for Selected Counties,” 2020.
- 10 Reproduced from: Hill, Lee Ann, et. al. (July 2020). The Public Health Dimensions of California Wildfire and Wildfire Prevention, Mitigation and Suppression. Physicians, Scientists, and Engineers (PSE) for Healthy Energy. With data from: CAL FIRE Open Data Hub: Fire Perimeters After 1950, National Interagency Fire Center 2019 Annual Report and CAL FIRE 2000-2017 Redbooks. Non-inclusive of fire-related fatalities in the local or federal direct protection area. Actual fatalities may be higher.

**Prop 15 is proudly endorsed by the California Professional Firefighters and the California State Firefighters Association.**

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