

April 17, 2013

To: The Honorable Wesley Chesbro, Chair
The Honorable Shannon L. Grove, Vice Chair
Members, Assembly Natural Resources Committee

From: Rex D. Frazier, President
Michael A. Gunning, Vice President
Kara Cross, General Counsel
Manolo P. Platin, Legislative Advocate

Re: AB 350 (Wieckowski) Timber harvesting plans: exempt activities
As Introduced February 12, 2013

Assembly Natural Resources Committee Hearing, April 29, 2013
PIFC Position: Support

The Personal Insurance Federation of California, representing six of the nation's largest insurance companies (State Farm, Farmers, Liberty Mutual Insurance, Progressive, Allstate and Mercury) who collectively write a majority of the personal line auto and home insurance in California, **supports AB 350: Timber harvesting plans: exempt activities by Assemblymember Wieckowski.**

We believe that AB 350 will help safeguard California against the constant and growing threat of wildfires by increasing the stump diameter size of trees targeted for fire-hazard related clearance to 28-34 inches. Under current law, trees to be cleared are limited to a stump diameter of 18-24 inches, impeding the California's Fire Safe Councils' efforts to reduce the number of trees that might cause crown fires in the event of a catastrophic wildfire. The California Fire Safe Council is an organization comprised of 50 private and public organizations including PIFC and several of its member companies, that is dedicated to providing fire-reduction resources to California communities. By allowing marginally larger stumps to qualify for clearance procedures, AB 350 will allow Fire Safe Councils across California to conduct more vegetation removal and fuel-reduction projects that will result in healthier, more fire-resistant forests in California.

Most local Fire Safe Councils provide employment opportunities for community members by contracting with local foresters and direct-hiring vegetation management specialists for fuel reduction projects. Current law provides an exemption for fuel reduction projects, the Forest Fire Prevention Exemption (FFPE), however, local Fire Safe Councils have been unable to use the FFPE as effectively as they might because the existing diameter limit on tree stumps makes such projects less economically viable for local foresters. Vegetation thinning projects can significantly decrease the chance of wildfires, but in the past decade the thinning of private forest lands has dropped to fewer than 1000 acres a year. AB 350 would provide an additional incentive for Fire Safe Councils to complete more vegetation removal around their homes and communities, using local companies and residents to conduct the projects and take responsibility for their defensible spaces.

For the reasons stated above PIFC **supports AB 350 (Wieckowski) and urges your "aye" vote.** If you have any questions regarding PIFC's position, please contact Manolo P. Platin at (916) 442-6646.

cc: Assemblymember Bob Wieckowski, Author
Gareth Elliot, Secretary of Legislative Affairs, Office of the Governor
Mario DeBernardo, Senior Consultant, Assembly Natural Resources Committee
John Kennedy, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus



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