

# MITT ROMNEY

## WILDLAND FIRE MITIGATION & MANAGEMENT COMMISSION ACT OF 2020

### BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR LEGISLATION

The American West is facing an unprecedented volume of wildland fire activity as a result of decades of poor forest management, increased fuel load, and a hotter and drier climate. This year, the National Interagency Fire Council reports more than 44,000 fires have burned over seven million acres across the country – up from 40,000 fires over the same time period in 2019. As of October 2020, approximately 1,423 wildfires have occurred in Utah this year – burning approximately 311,000 acres. Over 75 percent of Utah’s wildfires were human-caused, and the state has spent \$55 million fighting fires this year.

Federal wildland fire policy is a patchwork of legislation and agency guidance across departments and jurisdictions, further complicated by mixed landownership. This bill would require a review of the nation’s wildland firefighting strategy, accompanied by specific policy recommendations, in consultation with state and local stakeholders.

The Wildland Fire Mitigation & Management Commission Act of 2020 would convene experts with diverse backgrounds to recommend the best policies to manage lands before and after wildland fires, mitigate catastrophic damage during a fire, and minimize loss of human life and property.

### WHAT THE BILL DOES

The Wildland Fire Mitigation & Management Commission Act of 2020 establishes a commission of federal and non-federal stakeholders – including city and county level representation -- to study and recommend fire mitigation, management, and rehabilitation policies for forests and grasslands.

The Commission, jointly managed by the Secretaries of Interior, Agriculture, and Administrator of FEMA, is tasked with reporting to Congress recommendations on short- and long-term wildland fire mitigation and land maintenance to prevent future wildland fires from becoming catastrophic disasters.

#### Key Provisions

- The Commission is comprised of 25 members: 8 federal and 17 non-federal members. Preference for non-federal stakeholders is given to those from a state that has had at least one FEMA Fire Management Assistance declaration or major disaster declaration for a fire in at least four of the last five years.
- The Commission will develop two reports:
  - 1) Recommendations to Mitigate and Manage Fires
  - 2) Firefighting Aircraft and Aircraft Parts Inventory Assessment

The Commission will consider policies to improve forest management tactics, federal spending and budgeting for wildland fires, and long-term management and land maintenance policies.