

Rural County Representatives of California Reports Wildfire Funding Fix and Forest Management Reform Not Included in Final Budget Agreement

Sierra Sun Times
February 9, 2018

February 9, 2018 - Late Wednesday, Congressional leaders finalized a budget agreement that will raise the budget caps on defense and non-defense discretionary spending by \$296 billion over Fiscal 2018 and 2019. The proposal will provide \$90 billion in disaster relief for individuals recovering from hurricanes and wildfires. In addition, the deal includes \$20 billion in federal funds for new infrastructure projects for surface transportation and broadband deployment.

The budget agreement extends the stopgap funding measure which will keep the government funded through March 23, 2018 and avoid a government shutdown. Extending the stopgap funding measure will provide lawmakers time to finalize the omnibus appropriations package that will fund the government for the remainder of Fiscal 2018.

Missing from the agreement was a deal on a wildfire funding and forest management reform. A deal was struck earlier this week by Republicans and Democrats that paired a fire borrowing fix with moderate forest management reforms and a two-year reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools program. Negotiations fell apart at the eleventh hour, and the deal was not included in the final budget agreement. Congress missed an opportunity on one of the few remaining legislative vehicles for wildfire funding and forestry reform before the midterm elections in November. The next opportunity for lawmakers is to attach a deal to the Fiscal 2018 omnibus package that Congress is expected to pass before March 23, 2018, but the window to address wildfire reform is closing.

Wildfire stakeholders received a consolation prize on Wednesday night when lawmakers introduced \$90 billion in emergency supplemental appropriations for individuals still recovering from 2017's wildfire and hurricane seasons. \$90 billion is more than what was included in the emergency supplemental that passed the House in December 2017, and will fund economic recovery projects in California, Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Source: Rural County Representatives of California

12797-rural-county-representatives-of-california-reports-wildfire-funding-fix-and-forest-management-reform-not-included-in-final-budget-agreement