



## **OBAMA-BIDEN: COMMITTED TO WILDFIRE MANAGEMENT & COMMUNITY PROTECTION**

Barack Obama and Joe Biden salute the heroic efforts of America's local, state and federal wildland firefighters who risk their lives to battle the massive wildfires that have endangered communities throughout much of the country. The risk of fire to firefighters and communities could be significantly reduced by working hand-in-hand with states and localities and investing in effective fire prevention, mitigation, and land and forest management measures. *As President, Barack Obama will aggressively pursue an effective fire prevention, mitigation and land and forest management plan that decreases the fire risks that many communities are now facing.*

When wildfire threatens lives and property, an Obama-Biden Administration will increase the federal government's commitment to field the most professional, well-trained, and well-coordinated wildfire fighting force in the world. Unlike the Bush Administration, they will not finance these efforts by raiding the budgets relied upon by the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to provide public access to, and manage, the more than 430 million acres of public lands that they oversee. *Barack Obama will work with Governors, Congress and local officials on a bipartisan basis to develop and enact reliable, dedicated funding sources to fight the most catastrophic fires so that public lands may continue to be managed for public access, fish, wildlife, recreation, forestry and other multiple uses.*

### **As President, Barack Obama Will Aggressively Pursue An Effective Fire Prevention Plan That Decreases The Fire Risks to Communities.**

Decades of fire suppression, urban sprawl, and past timber management have altered historic fire cycles. In many forests today, wildfires burn with uncharacteristic intensity because of unnaturally high levels of small diameter trees and brush and endanger large numbers of rural and suburban communities across America. This situation is exacerbated by dry conditions, the spread of insects and disease, and prolonged drought associated with climate change.

- Barack Obama recognizes the need to invest in forest and rangeland health in order to reduce the risk that fires pose to communities. He will place a high priority on implementing cooperative projects to remove brush, small trees and other overgrown vegetation that serve as fuel for wildfires. Barack Obama will focus the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management's efforts on working with local communities on hazardous fuels projects to make communities safer and forests healthier.
- An Obama-Biden Administration will use controlled burns and prescribed natural fire to reduce such fuels in close coordination with those communities that are most at risk. Thousands of jobs will be created by working with communities to thin unnaturally crowded forests close to homes. And by coordinating fuel reduction efforts with biomass energy projects, communities will have the potential to generate new sources of low cost energy. Resources will be focused where they will do the most good: in the wildland-urban interface, and not in fighting fires or on logging projects in remote, backcountry areas.

- Reducing the dangers of wildfires cannot be addressed through federal action alone. Under an Obama-Biden Administration, the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and other agencies will work with local and state governments and insurance companies to pursue effective wildland urban interface planning, develop building codes and other “best practices” to prevent and mitigate fire impacts in high risk areas. By using fire-resistant building materials, removing fuels from around homes, and curtailing invasive species, the risk of fire can be reduced. Many communities and citizens are already stepping up to the plate and an Obama administration will be a partner in that initiative.

**Barack Obama will work with Governors, local officials, and Congress on a bipartisan basis to develop and enact a reliable, dedicated budget to meet the needs of firefighters, at-risk communities, and public lands.**

The U.S. Forest Service firefighting budget is based on a ten year average of firefighting costs that is out of step with the increased frequency, size and intensity of wildfires. Over the last decade, fires have burned an average of more than 7 million acres a year – twice the average of the 1990s.

The Bush Administration has failed to address this problem relying instead on a pass-the-buck strategy of raiding the budgets of popular programs that manage access for sportsmen, protect fish and wildlife habitat, and manage recreation usage. When those programs were drained, they sought emergency appropriations from Congress. In 2007, the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management “spent nearly \$1 billion more than was budgeted for firefighting, forcing both agencies to shift money from other programs to pay for firefighting.”

- Barack Obama will work with the Congress on a bipartisan basis to ensure agencies have the funds needed to suppress and manage wildfires without taking money from other important programs within the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. Although Congress provided supplemental funding for fire operations over the Bush Administration’s objection earlier this year, the agencies have once again run out of wildfire funds, forcing them to redirect funds from other land management activities. Barack Obama and Joe Biden support a plan to provide the necessary funding to fight truly catastrophic and expensive wildfires.

Paid for by Obama for America

Printed in House