

Wildfire Policy Resolution

SPONSORED BY Mayor Hardie Davis (Augusta, GA)

WHEREAS, there is a growing number of large, catastrophic wildfires that are impacting communities and their citizens across the West, while also creating significant reliability and resiliency concerns and financial liabilities for the electric power industry; and

WHEREAS, wildfire risk is increasing due to a confluence of factors, such as extreme heat, prolonged drought, and insect and disease infestations; development continues to encroach into the wildland-urban interface where people and structures co-exist with fire prone vegetation; and decades of fire suppression has led to a buildup of natural fuel, leading to larger and more destructive fires; and

WHEREAS, these factors are resulting in longer and more destructive fire seasons and commensurately higher costs (both in dollars and resources) for fighting fires and recovering from them, a trend that will likely continue into the future; and

WHEREAS, to make the electric grid a wildfire prevention system, many electric companies are devising and implementing comprehensive programs to mitigate and manage wildfire risk, including more frequent vegetation management cycles, increasing emergency response capabilities, and making new infrastructure investments; and

WHEREAS, as part of a comprehensive approach to managing wildfire risk, electric companies engage in vegetation management on and off their rights-of-way (ROWs) on private, state, and federal lands; however, critical energy infrastructure is often sited in ROWs that are susceptible to catastrophic wildfires and once ignited, intense wildfires can overwhelm energy infrastructure even in well-maintained ROWs, potentially leading to extended power outages; and

WHEREAS, gaining timely access to perform vegetation management inside and outside of ROWs to reduce fuel load remains a major challenge and creates liability concerns for electric companies.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, The African American Mayors Association urge Federal and State elected officials to reduce the legislative and regulatory barriers to: performing vegetation management, both inside and outside of the ROWs; developing and deploying new technologies that can enhance wildfire detection and response; and address liability concerns for electric companies; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, The African American Mayors Association supports the need for electric companies to be able to secure necessary cost recovery from public regulatory commissions for these essential public investments as well as damages for which they have been held liable.