



## H.R. 4866, the Fire Weather Development Act of 2024

*Introduced by Rep. Mike Garcia (R-CA). Cosponsored by Reps. Yadira Caraveo (D-CO) and Young Kim (R-CA).*

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H.R. 4866, the Fire Weather Development Act of 2024, directs the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to improve fire weather and fire environment forecasting, detection, and delivery of products or services through collaboration with other Federal and State agencies or departments, local emergency managers, and relevant entities.

### Background

In 2022, the National Interagency Fire Center reported almost 69,000 wildfires that burned nearly 7.6 million acres across the country. Over the last 5 years, the average annual cost for Federal firefighting and suppression has been \$2.8 billion. While forest and land management can help prevent wildfires, long- and short-term weather observations or modeling also play a critical role.

The Fire Weather Development Act of 2024 directs NOAA to develop and improve accurate fire weather and fire environment forecasts and warnings in order to reduce loss of life, reduce injuries, protect property, and reduce damage to the economy from wildfires. This will improve forecasting, detection, and delivery of products or services available to communities and localized efforts to predict and fight fires.

H.R. 4866 places an emphasis on developing and using novel technologies, such as advanced satellite detection coupled with weather modeling systems and active sensors suitable for potential deployment on spacecraft, aircraft, or unmanned aircraft systems. These technologies improve the monitoring and forecasting of fire fuel and active wildfires, wildfire behavior models, mapping efforts, and the overall prediction of wildfires and impacts, while also eliminating human risk of sending firefighters and operators into potential danger.

The Fire Weather Development Act of 2024 also recognizes the critical need for interagency collaboration. The legislation establishes an Interagency Coordinating Committee on Wildfires, whose purpose is to coordinate the development of accurate and timely wildfire forecasting, detection, monitoring, and delivery of related products or services that best assist State and local emergency officials while avoiding duplication of activities.

In addition to the creation of the committee, H.R. 4866 also establishes an independent National Advisory Council on Wildfires. This advisory committee will comprise of members independent of the federal government to provide advice to the Committee regarding Federal wildfire forecasting, detection, monitoring, and delivery of products and services. This ensures that the local officials, communities, and people who are directly affected by wildfires have a seat at the table and can provide input on what tools or services are most needed.

The authorization of appropriations in this bill are equal to amounts appropriated in FY 24.