

Gosar Floor Speech

H.R. 4775, the Ozone Standards Implementation Act, Wildfire Amendment
Gosar #6 on the Rules Website / GOSAR_01

I rise today to offer a commonsense amendment that will ensure that the study on ozone formation in the underlying bill analyzes the relative contribution from wildfires.

The National Interagency Coordination Center reported this year that we set a new record in terms of total acreage burned from wildfires with more than 10.1 million acres going up in smoke.

This significant increase is not the result of more wildfires as the nonpartisan congressional Research Service reported last month that “the number of wildfires has stayed about the same over the last 30 years but the number of acres burned annually has increased...by nearly double the acreage burned in the 1990s.”

Timber removal is down 80 percent over the last 30 years and acreage burned is up. There is a direct correlation between thinning our forests and overall forest health.

As a medical professional for over 25 years, I know firsthand that preventive care is a much cheaper and effective treatment as opposed to dealing with an illness or disease after it has already been diagnosed.

Let us not forget the old adage an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Unfortunately, the federal government has failed to employ such a strategy when it comes to our nation’s forests and continues to spend billions of dollars on the backend on suppression activities.

CRS reports that the top five years with the largest wildfire acreage burned since 1960 all occurred between 2006 and 2015. In Arizona, we have seen the tragic results of this agency misprioritization firsthand as the five largest fires in Arizona’s history occurred between 2002 and 2011.

Data released from NASA a few years ago concluded that one catastrophic wildfire

can emit more carbon emissions in a few days than total vehicle emissions in an entire state over the course of a year.

My commonsense amendment simply seeks to determine the overall contribution to ozone formation from wildfires. We should all want to have this information and know the extent to which ozone formation from wildfire emissions occurs.

I am proud to be a cosponsor of the underlying bill and applaud Rep. Olson, Chairman Upton and my other colleagues that were actively involved with moving this much needed legislation forward.

Most states are just beginning to adopt the 2008 ozone standards as the EPA didn't announce implementation guidance and a final rule until March 6, 2015. Rather than allowing time for those standards to be implemented, the EPA moved the goal posts and is seeking to unilaterally implement a regulation that has been projected to be the most expensive mandate in our nation's history.

The Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry recently reported that "The EPA's new ozone standard of 70 ppb will be virtually impossible for Arizona to meet due to Arizona's high levels of background, limited local sources, and unique geography." And that "implementation of the current rule in Arizona is not reasonable, based in sound science or achievable."

Again, my amendment simply ensures that the study on ozone formation in the underlying bill analyzes the relative contribution from wildfires. Chairman Upton supports my amendment and I wholeheartedly support the underlying bill. I ask my colleagues to do the same and support my amendment and H.R. 4775. And with that I reserve.