

Opinion: Governor's cuts to fire safety in Tahoe don't make sense

By Ted Gaines

As we near the fifth anniversary of the devastating Angora Fire that ravaged the Lake Tahoe area, leaving destruction in its wake, I am baffled by the governor's decision to put lives and property in even more danger by cutting fire protection funding for the region.

The governor's proposed budget eliminates the entire \$2.3 million general fund money for Lake Tahoe Basin fire protection, and leaves only one forester and four part-time seasonal forestry aids to provide fire prevention services such as defensible space inspections and enforcement.



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Residents will continue to have some fire protection services through local fire districts. If these cuts are implemented, however, resources could be stretched thin and emergency response times could be delayed. As witnessed with the Angora Fire, every second counts in containing potential wildfires.

Lake Tahoe fire safety officials also expressed concern with the lack of funding and vowed to work with me on the issue.

"We are equally troubled by this latest cut to the vital fire

protection services we provide the community and will do all we can to reverse this budget decision," North Tahoe Fire District Chief Duane Whitelaw.

I intend to follow up on this matter until funding for the safety and protection of the residents of Lake Tahoe is fully restored.

I encourage people to contact the governor's office to express their discontent with his proposed cuts.

One of the essential services government should provide its citizens is public safety. We need to seriously evaluate things when we've reached a point where we can't even provide that peace of mind to residents. If you are as upset about this budget decision as I am, I urge you to call Gov. Brown and ask him for reconsideration. The governor can be reached at (916) 445.2841.

Ted Gaines represents the 1st Senate District, which includes all or parts of Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Lassen, Modoc, Mono, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Sacramento and Sierra counties.