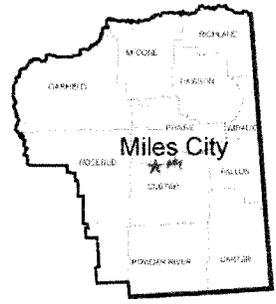


EXHIBIT 8  
DATE 2/16/11  
HB 468

# Eastern Montana Fire Alliance

Representing the Counties of:

Carter  
Custer  
Dawson  
Fallon  
Garfield



McCone  
Powder River  
Prairie  
Richland  
Rosebud  
Wibaux

The Eastern Montana Fire Alliance, stand in opposition to HB468

The Eastern Alliance consists of county fire wardens and chiefs from Carter, Custer, Dawson, Fallon, Garfield, McCone, Powder River, Prairie, Richland, Rosebud, and Wibaux counties located in Southeastern Montana.

Our members believe that this bill will not be advantageous to the firefighting efforts in eastern Montana. Having access to aviation resources is critical to keeping our fires small and within a reasonable cost. In past fire seasons, during very active fire activity in our geographic region and when other regions are also very active, eastern Montana usually does not rank very high on the resource needs list, meaning that when there are large fires going that not only helicopters but all other resources are assigned and not available for our use.

It is our understanding that most contractors have or try to get an exclusive use contract, and if they are not awarded an exclusive use contract, then they operate on a call when needed contract. To us, this means they may be in Montana or they could be in California, Washington, Idaho, New Mexico, or where ever the work is. They aren't waiting around just for fires to happen in Montana, which is understandable as they have a business to run and bills to pay. By limiting the amount of time that state aircraft can operate during a season will probably mean that the state will not be able to support their aviation program and it will likely go away.

In conclusion, by potentially eliminating the state aircraft from doing their job during the fire seasons we feel that the state aircraft will go away. This will leave Montana, especially eastern Montana, short of the aviation resources needed to do our job by keeping fires on state and private ground as small as possible, thereby keeping the cost to the state and counties as low as possible.

We respectfully ask you to oppose this bill.

Rob Gilbert President of the Eastern Fire Alliance

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|---|--|
| Neil Kettelmann Carter County Fire Warden/Chief       | Keith Hendrickson Alzada Fire Chief          |
| Bud Peterson Custer County Fire Warden/Chief          | Tim Mort Dawson County Fire Warden/Chief     |
| Tom Muckle Fallon County Fire Warden                  | Randy Hoenke Baker Fire Dist. Chief          |
| Ray Hageman Garfield County Fire Warden/Chief         | Jess Beery McCone County Fire Warden/Chief   |
| Ray Ragsdale Broadus Fire Chief                       | Joe Cathy Powder River fire Warden           |
| Bill Klunder Prairie County Fire Warden/Chief         | Dwight Tague Terry VFD Chief                 |
| Marshall Vojacek Savage VFD Chief                     | Brian Nelson Wibaux County Fire Warden/Chief |
| Doug Martens Rosebud County Fire Warden/Chief         |  |
| Ken Volk Richland County Fire Warden Sidney VFD Chief |  |