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## **OLR Bill Analysis**

### **HB 5152**

#### ***AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN AUTHORITIES RELATED TO THE PREVENTION OF WILDFIRES.***

#### **SUMMARY**

This bill expands the authority of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) commissioner, state forest fire warden, and governor to limit activities across the state in specified ways to prevent wildfires.

First, the bill bans open brush burning within 100 feet of a woodland or grass land area when the commissioner identifies the forest fire risk as high or very high. Under existing law, unchanged by the bill, this is also banned when she finds the fire risk is extreme. By law, the DEEP commissioner must generally allow open brush burning on residential properties, municipal landfills and recycling centers, and transfer stations except in certain circumstances (e.g., when there is a heightened fire risk or the municipality prohibits it).

Secondly, the bill allows the state forest fire warden to ban open flames on all or any part of land the commissioner controls (e.g., state parks), if the DEEP commissioner finds it necessary. The bill also allows the forest fire warden, if there is an emergency, to extend the deadline for volunteer fire department chiefs to submit to the warden reimbursement requests for their services. Under current law, chiefs must submit them within one month after the department provides services. The bill allows the warden to extend the deadline to four months.

Additionally, current law allows the governor, when there is extreme drought or other hazardous conditions that increase forest fire risk, to (1) close to the public all sections of woodland and brush land in the state for a time period he sets and (2) ban any open-air fire in any or all

areas of the state. The bill allows the governor to take either or both of these actions rather than requiring him to do both simultaneously, as current law requires. The bill also increases the range of the fines for violating either of these restrictions, from between \$5 and \$100 to between \$500 and \$1,000. Under existing law, unchanged by the bill, a person may also be imprisoned for up to six months for a violation.

Lastly, the bill makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Environment Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 33 Nay 0 (03/04/2026)