

## *The Civilian Conservation Center Enhancement Act*

*Sponsors: Senator Merkley and Senator Daines (R-MT)*

### ***Background:***

The U.S. Forest Service operates 24 Civilian Conservation Centers on federal lands across the country, including three in Oregon. These centers, which are part of the national Job Corps program, help eligible young people ages 16 through 24 complete their high school education, train them for meaningful careers, and assist them with obtaining employment. CCCs have a unique mission and combine the traditional Job Corps program with course and skills to address our nation's conservation and wildfire challenges. Since October 1, 2021, 249 students at CCCs have deployed on fire assessments, many for multiple times, and provided 150,000 hours of service on fires and other conservation projects across the country.

The bill is endorsed by the National Job Corps Association, the National Federation of Federal Employees, The Corps Network, the Western Fire Chiefs Association, the Grassroots Wildland Firefighters, the Forest Resources Association, and American Forests.

The bill would:

- Direct the U.S. Forest Service and the Department of Interior to offer and pilot specialized training for wildland fire, forestry, and rangeland management at Civilian Conservation Centers.
- Direct the U.S. Forest Service and Department of Interior to conduct an assessment of workforce needs at public land agencies and related industries to determine what necessary curriculum, develop marketing and recruitment materials, and provide specialized staff.
- Set a goal for both the U.S. Forest Service and the Department of Interior to hire 300 CCC graduates each per year into wildland firefighter or other critical workforce needs and allows the agencies to offer signing bonus to graduates.
- Provide a direct hire authority to the U.S. Forest Service and the Department of Interior for graduates of CCC programs and directs both agencies to identify and develop career pathways for graduates at their agencies.
- Clarify the U.S. Forest Service and Department of Interior's authority to pay students at CCC for work they do to improve federal lands.
- Create a pilot program to deploy CCC students to repair or construct workforce housing to house wildland firefighters and other agency employees.