



# The Civilian Conservation Center Enhancement Act

*Senator Merkley (D-OR) & Senator Daines (R-MT)*

The bipartisan *Civilian Conservation Center Enhancement Act* directs the Secretary of Agriculture to offer specialized training, specifically wildland firefighter training, to Job Corps Civilian Conservation Center students.

Across the United States, the Forest Service operates 24 Civilian Conservation Centers (CCCs) on federal lands, 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 courses and skills to address our nation's conservation and wildfire challenges. In 2022, students at CCCs deployed on fire assessments, many for multiple times, and provided 204,633 hours of service on fires and other conservation projects across the country – a 20 percent increase from 2021.

The bill would:

- Direct the U.S. Forest Service to offer and pilot specialized training for wildland fire, forestry, and rangeland management at Civilian Conservation Centers;
- Direct the U.S. Forest Service to conduct an assessment of workforce needs at public land agencies and related industries to determine necessary curriculum, develop marketing and recruitment materials, and provide specialized staff;
- Set a goal for the U.S. Forest Service 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 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's authority to pay students at CCC for work they do to improve federal lands; and
- Create a pilot program to deploy CCC students to repair or construct workforce housing to house wildland firefighters and other agency employees.

The bill is endorsed by the National Job Corps Association, the National Federation of Federal Employees, the Wildland Firefighter Foundation, and the Grassroots Wildland Firefighters.