

Press Release\*

# Measure V DOES NOT Support Fire Agencies

Nevada County Professional Firefighters, IAFF Local 3800

September 30, 2022

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## **Not. One. Dime.**

Measure V, the proposed “**Fire Tax**” doesn’t provide one dime to fire. It won’t pay for one firefighter. Or one fire engine. Or even a hose.

So why is it being promoted as a fire tax? Because if it were called a “**Vegetation Mitigation Tax**” (which is what it is) the County didn’t think you would vote for it.

*Disingenuous? We think so.*

Firefighters Local 3800 represents the men and women employed by Grass Valley/Nevada City, Higgins Fire District, Nevada County Consolidated Fire District, Penn Valley Fire Protection District and Rough and Ready Fire District. If you live within our boundaries we are most likely the firefighters that will respond if your house is on fire. **WE save your homes.**

## **Sadly, this tax won’t do anything to fight a fire. To suggest otherwise is false.**

We were intending to stay out of this conversation, misleading as we felt it was, until we saw signs pop up all over the county stating that your yes vote on Measure V will “save our homes.” **It won’t.** But it could certainly harm our ability to do so.

## **What Measure V will do:**

As written, **Measure V will increase the Nevada County sales tax by 1/2%** and is predicted to raise approximately \$12M per year, which will go into the Nevada County General Fund. The stated intention appears to be to use these funds to mitigate vegetation, which we happen to think is a pretty good idea. But we need to be clear—this tax has **nothing** to do with fire and won’t provide a **single dime** to local fire agencies.

Calling this **vegetation mitigation tax a fire tax** makes people think that it is a tax that will support fire. The selected wording was *intentional*; using the word fire in the title and text implies the money will be used to support fire agencies. **Polling verified that making such implications increased the probability of success.**

## **Why using fire in the title and text of this tax increase matters to us:**

Many local fire districts need to pass parcel tax increases to continue providing services at the level their community deserves. Real fire tax increases are necessary to actually save our homes. Since voters may believe they just voted to increase their fire tax, local agencies that ask their parcel owners to provide additional support will face a “**no**” vote from their residents.

In Nevada County a number of local fire districts operate at 50% of the national recommendation for staffing, increasing the time required to have an adequate firefighting force on scene. OSHA requires four firefighters to be on scene before entering a burning building, yet with current staffing levels most agencies run two firefighters per engine, so they may be unable to enter until another engine arrives from a neighboring agency. Structure fires double in size every minute. You do the math.

## Is vegetation mitigation important?

Yes. Nevada County voters are smart. They understand the need for vegetation mitigation. A strong case could have been made to gain voter support without resorting to shouting “**FIRE!**” in a crowded theater.

The *International Journal of Wildland Fire* analysis of the 2018 Camp Fire conclusively found that **80 miles of shaded fuel breaks in Paradise did little to save homes.** What appears to have saved homes were firefighters in the front yard and fire-resistant building material. This peer-reviewed study concludes “defensive action by fire-fighters was also found to be extremely important—in fact, more so than any other factor. Various lot-level factors were important, too, but *the role of defensible space in preventing structure loss was inconclusive from these data sets.*”

**While the Camp Fire appears to have benefited little by what Measure V proposes,** there is a strong case to be made for vegetation mitigation, the benefits of creating shaded fuel breaks and clearing decades of neglected vegetation. Many fire scenarios show vegetation mitigation to be an important factor in fighting catastrophic wildfire, saving both lives and property.

### To recap:

It appears we can all appreciate the value of **vegetation mitigation.** We just wish there hadn’t been the perceived need to mislead voters by using the word fire, thus implying local fire agencies would benefit by the proposed tax increase. Firefighters save our homes. **Measure V doesn’t provide one dime toward suppressing fire—it won’t pay for one firefighter; it won’t pay for one piece of fire apparatus and it won’t put out your house when it catches fire.**

We have no intention of trying to influence your vote on Measure V but we do want you to understand that **Measure V does not support fire agencies.**

**Clayton Thomas**

President

Nevada County Professional Firefighters

IAFF Local 3800



\*Original press release reformatted to add emphasis.

As reported by KNCO: <https://knco.com/firefighters-say-measure-v-is-misleading/>

As reported by Yubanet: <https://yubanet.com/regional/election-2022-firefighters-local-3800-measure-v-does-not-support-fire-agencies/>

As NOT reported by The Union (as of 10/1/2022): <https://www.theunion.com/>

As NOT reported by The Sierra Sun (as of 10/1/2022): <https://www.sierrasun.com/>