

## OFFICE OF POLICY AND LEGAL ANALYSIS

To: Members, Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry  
From: Karen S. Nadeau, Legislative Analyst  
Date: March 9, 2021  
Subj: **LD 268 An Act To Eliminate Online Burn Permit Fees for All Areas of the State**

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**SUMMARY:** This bill provides that a person may not be charged a fee to obtain a burn permit online. It allows a vendor or owner of a private party burn permit software system to charge a municipality for use of private party burn permit software

### TESTIMONY

**Proponents:** *Maine Forest Service; Maine Fire Chiefs Association; Maine Municipal Association*

*Written testimony only: Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine*

- Burn permits help us prevent wildfires in Maine, encourage safe burn practices, and alert local officials where a burn is happening.
- Currently, it costs \$7 to purchase an open burn permit online; although, anyone can get a hand-written permit from a town fire official or forest ranger for free.
- MFS believes the elimination of the fee will only increase the use of the system and result in a higher level of wildfire prevention success in Maine.

**Opponents:** *None*

**NFNA:** *None*

### RECENT LEGISLATION

129<sup>th</sup> Legislature – LD 1788, AA To Eliminate Online Burn Permit Fees for All Areas of the State

ACF Committee voted unanimously OTPA; bill died on the Appropriations Table when the Legislature adjourned due to the pandemic in March 2020 and did not reconvene.

**PRELIMINARY FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT:** *Not yet received.*

Fiscal note for LD 1788 committee report is as follows:

This bill would eliminate the \$7 fee the DACF charges for electronically issued burn permits via their online permit system. Currently, \$4 is deposited into the GF, \$2 is transferred to the municipality where the permit was issued and \$1 goes to InforME for the administrative cost of the online permit system. In unorganized areas, \$6 of the fee is deposited into the GF and \$1 is for the administrative cost for InforME.

Beginning in fiscal year 2020-21, elimination of the fee would reduce annual GF revenue by \$43,139, reduce revenue to municipalities by approx. \$20,000 a year and reduce revenue available to pay InforME by \$9,600. The bill includes an ongoing GF appropriation to ACF of \$9,600 beginning in fiscal year 2020-21 to continue to pay InforME for burn permits issued through the state online system. Municipalities may incur additional costs if the vendor or owner of a private party burn permit software system chooses to impose fees for its use.