



SB 374 – California Firefighters’ Memorial Park Restoration Act
Increases revenue to fund the California Firefighters’ Memorial Park

SUMMARY

SB 374 brings the fees paid by firefighters when renewing a firefighter license plate in line with other specialty plates, increasing the cost by \$5, to a total of \$40 for a renewal of registration. The additional revenue generated by this increase will be utilized by the California Fire Foundation to renovate and update the California Firefighters’ Memorial in Capitol Park.

BACKGROUND

Current law establishes the California Firefighter License Plate Program, which was designed and created by the California Professional Firefighters. Using an image from the 1991 box office hit *Backdraft*, the California firefighter license plate has become a key trademark within the fire service; enabling only active and retired firefighters to purchase these plates for display on their automobiles, trucks, trailers and motorcycles.

For over two decades, the Firefighter License Plate Program has provided dedicated funding to the California Fire Foundation (Foundation), a non-profit organization charged with providing assistance to firefighters, their families, and the communities that they serve. Among these duties, the most important is the ongoing maintenance of the California Firefighters Memorial, and annual memorial ceremonies honoring those who have given the ultimate sacrifice in service to our state.

The money collected through the license plate program goes to the California Firefighters’ Memorial Fund, which provides critically needed assistance to the Foundation. By statute, the funding is restricted to three purposes: the maintenance and repair of the California Firefighters’ Memorial; ceremonies to honor the memories of fallen firefighters; and an informational guide detailing survivor benefits to support the spouses and families of fallen firefighters.

THE PROBLEM

Etched in the Memorial’s limestone walls are the names of almost 1,400 men and women who relentlessly put themselves in the face of danger every day, protecting the people and property of the great State of California. Each year since 2002, the California Firefighters Memorial Ceremony has

honored those firefighters who have lost their lives in the line of duty or from a job-related illness. This solemn remembrance is steeped in the traditions of the firehouse and hundreds of firefighters, family members, and grateful citizens who gather in the heart of California’s Capital, and pay tribute to those who have paid the ultimate price to keep us safe.

The ceremony features a moving uniformed firefighter procession, personal tributes, and the presentation of a flag to the families of those whose names are newly added to the Memorial Wall. The ceremony has become a touchstone for the profession, and a chance for firefighters, families, and ordinary citizens to grieve and remember together.

Tragically, the original Memorial Wall surface has been filled with the names of the fallen in the two decades since its dedication, and renovations must be made to ensure that future generations of fire service families will be able to properly honor and mourn their loved ones. Slightly increasing the fees for the Firefighter License Plate Program will ensure that the Foundation has sufficient financial support to complete the renovation process.

The California Firefighters’ Memorial stands as hallowed ground for every member of the fire service who has dedicated their lives to their communities, and SB 374 will ensure that it continues to stand as a touchstone for all those who have yet to serve.

THE SOLUTION

SB 374 increases the revenue available to the California Fire Foundation by increasing firefighter specialty license plate fees, ensuring that California can adequately honor our fallen firefighters.

SUPPORT

- The California Professional Firefighters (Sponsor)
- Fire Districts Association of California
- California Fire Chiefs Association
- League of California Cities

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Lesley Brizuela, *Policy Analyst*
Lesley.Brizuela@sen.ca.gov | Phone: (916) 651-4008