



**COUNTY OF
SAN BERNARDINO**

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May 17, 2007

The Honorable Kevin Jeffries
66th Assembly District
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 283 (Jeffries)– As Amended April 10, 2007 - SUPPORT

Dear Assemblyman Jeffries:

The County of San Bernardino is pleased to support AB 283, which would permit a fire company in an unincorporated town to be organized by filing a certificate with the Office of Emergency Services and require the fire company to renew the certificate annually with the Office of Emergency Services (OES).

As you know, the State of California currently does not have a single information collection point for any of the (volunteer) fire companies (VFC's) operating within the State of California. In many instances, the State does not know where these VFC's are located, what communities they serve, how many volunteer members they have, or what fire apparatus they own and operate. The State has a large group of local first responders scattered across the state that are simply unaccounted for. AB 283 proposes to require an annual certificate of organization document to be filed once a year with a single state agency, the State Office of Emergency Services (OES) instead of the current twice a year with 58 County Recorders. Additionally, the bill would require the Office of Emergency Services to develop a form for the certificate and make that form accessible on the OES official Web site. AB 283 does not create any additional state oversight over volunteer fire companies. Instead, it creates a mechanism for state and local officials to know the location of these first responders.

In San Bernardino County, there have been two recent instances where VFC's have been formed. Current law does not require these companies to notify County Fire. In each case, these companies were established in unincorporated areas of the County that are already being served by legal fire protection districts. This legislation will enable the State and County to be notified of such formation to help improve the coordination, training, and planning for fires, disasters, and homeland security. Therefore, the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors supports AB 283.

Sincerely,

PAUL BIANE
Chairman, Board of Supervisors

The mission of the government of the County of San Bernardino is to satisfy its customers by providing service that promotes the health, safety, well being, and quality of life of its residents according to the County Charter, general laws, and the will of the people it serves.