

ALEX PADILLA

U.S. SENATOR  CALIFORNIA

Smoke Exposure Research Act

Increasingly frequent and catastrophic wildfires pose a critical threat to important winegrowing regions as well as vintners, vineyards, wineries, and the communities they support — particularly in California, Washington, and Oregon — the top three states for wine production in the U.S.

Not only can wildfires directly destroy vines and wineries, but wildfire smoke itself can damage wine grapes through prolonged exposure, which can be absorbed into the grape and create an ashy taste known as “smoke taint,” compromising the quality and value of wine produced from these grapes.

This problem is relatively new—smoke taint is still poorly understood.

The “Smoke Exposure Research Act” directs the USDA’s Agricultural Research Service to collaborate with experts in viticulture and enology in order to identify smoke taint compounds, establish standardized testing methods, and develop risk assessment tools and mitigation strategies.

Research from University of California, Davis, Washington State University, and Oregon State University highlights the unpredictable nature of smoke taint, with multiple factors influencing its impact.

“Wildfire smoke poses an increasing threat to the American wine industry, yet its impact on winegrapes is complex and influenced by multiple factors, including duration, intensity, grape variety, and stage of development. While significant progress has been made in understanding smoke exposure, **critical research gaps remain**. Continued investment in research is essential to provide growers and wineries with the information and tools needed to make timely, science-based decisions—ensuring the long-term viability of the wine industry and its vital contributions to the economy.” – *Natalie Collins, President, California Association of Winegrape Growers and Co-Chair of the West Coast Smoke Exposure Task Force*

With the U.S. wine industry contributing over \$276 billion to the economy, this legislation is crucial for protecting vineyards, wineries, and the communities they sustain.

The “Smoke Exposure Research Act” is endorsed by the West Coast Smoke Exposure Task Force, including Allied Grape Growers, California Association of Winegrape Growers, Family Winemakers of California, Washington Winegrowers Association, Washington Wine Institute, and the Wine Institute, as well as Napa Valley Vintners and UC Davis