



RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES
OF CALIFORNIA

August 23, 2022

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Assembly Bill 1078 (Patterson) – REQUEST FOR SIGNATURE

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), we respectfully request your signature on Assembly Bill 1078 (Patterson), which exempts post-fire residential rebuilding of homes destroyed in 2020's devastating fires from the recently-adopted California Energy Commission (CEC) solar energy installation mandates. RCRC is an association of thirty-nine rural California counties, and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from each member county.

RCRC member counties contain much of California's forested lands and have suffered the vast majority of the state's most catastrophic wildfire events in the last decade. Many of these fires also occurred in some of the most socioeconomically disadvantaged areas of the state where economic resources to mitigate the impacts of such disasters and aid residents with recovery are extremely limited.

The CEC recently required all new residential buildings built after January 1, 2020 to be equipped with solar photovoltaic systems. Since post-fire rebuilding is considered "new construction" and must adhere to the current building standards at the time of rebuilding, this new mandate will add significant cost to the price of rebuilding for homeowners who already lack the resources to rebuild their homes.

In 2019, Assembly Bill 178 (Chapter 259, 2019) provided similar relief for those whose homes were damaged or destroyed in the Camp Fire (Butte County) and Tubbs Fire; however, that relief does not apply to homes that were destroyed in the horrendous fires of 2020 that burned 4 million acres and damaged or destroyed thousands of structures. AB 1078 provides much-needed relief for the repair, restoration, or

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replacement of residential structures damaged or destroyed in 2020 by a disaster in an area for which the Governor declared a state of emergency.

As these communities begin rebuilding, many insured homeowners are finding themselves underinsured. Rebuilding is even more difficult for uninsured homeowners. This is becoming an even larger problem because many insurers have been canceling policies for those who live in high-fire risk areas and homeowners are finding that they cannot afford replacement policies.

While it is admittedly less expensive to install solar panels on a newly-constructed home, even those reduced costs add up and make rebuilding harder and more expensive for those who have already lost everything and may not have the resources necessary to rebuild the life they once had.

Contrary to the assertions of some interest groups, compliance with the CEC solar mandate will do NOTHING to increase energy reliability or resiliency for those who are rebuilding their homes and who live in areas subject to frequent energy outages. As thousands of Californians learned during the state's widespread Public Safety Power Shutoff events, merely having solar panels on one's home will not keep the lights on when there is a power outage. In order to achieve the resiliency benefits those groups claim the CEC mandate provides, homeowners will also have to install even more expensive energy storage systems that can add an extra \$10,000-\$20,000 to the cost of rebuilding.

For the above reasons, RCRC respectfully requests your signature on AB 1078. Please do not hesitate to contact me at jkennedy@rcrcnet.org or (916) 447-4806 with any questions.

Sincerely,



JOHN KENNEDY
Policy Advocate

cc: The Honorable Jim Patterson, Member of the State Assembly