



RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES
OF CALIFORNIA

June 5, 2020

The Honorable Bill Quirk
Member, California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 2163
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Assembly Bill 2421 – SUPPORT
As Amended June 4, 2020**

Dear Assembly Member Quirk:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), we offer our support for your recently-amended Assembly Bill 2421, relating to generator placement for wireless communication sites. RCRC is an association of thirty-seven rural California counties, and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from those member counties.

In an effort to mitigate further wildfire risk, California's large electric utilities conducted an unprecedented number of power shutoffs during the 2019 wildfire season. These public safety power shutoffs (PSPS) events affected millions throughout the state, leaving residents without electricity for basic necessities such as utilizing certain medical equipment and refrigerating perishables. PSPS events also significantly affected other services that depend on electricity to operate, such as telecommunications, thereby leaving many communities, especially those in rural fire-prone areas, without a reliable means of communication in case of an emergency. Unlike traditional landlines that require very little additional electricity for operation, new digital technologies, such as Voice over Internet Protocol and cellular service, are dependent on sustained power for the infrastructure to function. During PSPS events, telecommunication providers must provide some form of backup power generation to continue service.

Last year's PSPS events brought to the forefront the systemic infrastructure weaknesses that exist in both the electricity grid, and the telecommunication systems. This is more acute in rural areas that have challenging terrain, historically making redundancy and permanent backup infrastructure almost non-existent. With the inevitable approaching wildfire season, and accompanying PSPS events, the ability to expeditiously deploy back-up power generation to cell towers to mitigate loss of wireless communication services during a power outage is vital.

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AB 2421 sets forth a streamlined local permitting process for siting back-up power generators on macro cellular tower sites through January 1, 2024. Specifically, the bill provides that siting an emergency standby generator that meets specified standards, proposed at an existing permitted macro cell tower site, is subject only to a ministerial permitting process. Additionally, a local agency that receives a permit application to install an emergency standby generator is required to approve or deny the application within 60 days of submittal of the application, or the application will be deemed approved.

RCRC appreciates your acceptance of our amendment that would explicitly require, as a condition of permit approval, that a project must comply with all applicable laws. As amended, AB 2421 would maintain the ability of local governments to protect its residents by only approving projects that meet applicable health and safety standards. RCRC believes the streamlined local permitting process will help telecommunication providers effectively and expeditiously deploy back-up power generation to cell towers to mitigate loss of wireless communication services during a power outage.

For these reasons, we are pleased to support your AB 2421. If you should have any questions or concerns, please contact me at trhine@rcrcnet.org or (916) 447-4806.

Sincerely,



TRACY RHINE
Legislative Advocate

cc: Angela Mapp, Chief Consultant, Assembly Local Government Committee
William Weber, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus