



Rural County Representatives of California

Board of Directors Meeting

**Wednesday
January 21, 2026
9:00 A.M.**

**1215 K Street, Suite 1650
Sacramento, CA 95814**

**Rural County Representatives of California
Board of Directors Meeting
January 21, 2026 – 9:00 a.m.
1215 K Street, Suite 1650
Sacramento, CA 95814**

**Additional Teleconference Location(s) are Listed on the
Last Page of this Agenda**

(All Teleconference Locations are Accessible to the Public)

This meeting will also be livestreamed for public access. Members of the public can watch or listen to the meeting using one of the following methods:

1. Join the Zoom meeting application on your computer, tablet or smartphone:
Go to: <https://rcrcnet.zoom.us/j/82323466025>
Enter Password: 652643

2. Call-in and listen to the meeting:
Dial +1 (669) 444-9171
Enter meeting ID: 823 2346 6025
Enter password: 652643

PUBLIC COMMENT USING ZOOM: Members of the public who join the Zoom meeting, either through the Zoom app or by calling in, will be able to provide live public comment at specific points throughout the meeting.

EMAIL PUBLIC COMMENT: One may also email public comment to mchui@rcrcnet.org before or during the meeting. All emailed public comments will be forwarded to all RCRC Board of Directors members.

Executive Summary Immediately Following Agenda

AGENDA

1. Call to Order, Determination of Quorum and Self Introductions

*Chair, Supervisor Miles Menetrey, Mariposa County
First Vice Chair, Supervisor Bob Nelson, Santa Barbara County
Second Vice Chair, Supervisor Anne Cottrell, Napa County
Immediate Past Chair, Supervisor Geri Byrne, Modoc County*

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Public Comment

At this time any member of the public may address the Board. Speakers are asked to state their name for the record but are not required to do so. Comments are usually limited to no more than 3 minutes per speaker

4. Consent Agenda – ACTION

- a. December 10, 2025 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes**
- b. RCRC Resolution 26-01: RCRC Board Travel Policy**

Milena De Melo, Finance Director

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- c. 2026 Appointments**

*Chair, Supervisor Miles Menetrey, Mariposa County
Patrick Blacklock, President and CEO*

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II. Designate First Deputy Chair and Second Deputy Chair of the RCRC Board to Serve on the Water and Natural Resources Matters, Regulatory Matters, and Legislative Matters	Page 21
III. Rural Counties' Nominee to Serve on the National Association of Counties' Western Interstate Region Board	Page 23
IV. Appointment of Two Members of the RCRC Board to Serve on the Rural Advancement Institute (RAI) Board	Page 25
d. RCRC 2026 Investment Policy Renewal <i>Milena De Melo</i>	Page 27
e. RCRC 2021-2026 Revised Pay Rate Schedules <i>Milena De Melo</i>	Page 35
f. Ad Hoc Committee Updates	
I. Carrier of Last Resort Ad Hoc Committee: Final Report and Next Steps <i>Supervisor Chris Lopez, Monterey County, COLR Ad Hoc Committee Chair (Staff: Tracy Rhine, Senior Policy Advocate, and Leigh Kammerich, Senior Policy Advocate)</i>	Page 55
II. Williamson Act Ad Hoc Committee: Final Report Recommended Revisions and Next Steps <i>Supervisor Geri Byrne, Modoc County, Williamson Act Ad Hoc Committee Chair (Staff: John Kennedy, Senior Policy Advocate)</i>	Page 77

5. 2026 Officers Swearing-In

The Honorable David Tangipa, Member of the California State Assembly

6. RCRC Outgoing Chair Remarks

Immediate Past Chair, Supervisor Geri Byrne, Modoc County

- a. Moment of Silence in Honor of the Honorable Doug LaMalfa, Member of the U.S. House of Representatives

7. RCRC Incoming Chair Remarks

Chair, Supervisor Miles Menetrey, Mariposa County

8. President's Report

Patrick Blacklock

9. Member County Concerns and Issues

10.

Guest Speaker:

Karen Ross

Secretary, California Department of Food and Agriculture

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11. Business and Administrative Matters		
a. RCRC Resolution 26-02: Board of Directors Code of Conduct		Page 93
<i>Patrick Blacklock</i>		
12. Governmental Affairs (<i>Discussion and possible action relative to</i>)		
a. Regulatory Matters (<i>Discussion and possible action relative to</i>)		
I. California Public Utilities Commission Update		Page 105
<i>Leigh Kammerich</i>		
<i>John Kennedy</i>		
<i>Tracy Rhine</i>		
II. Environmental Services Joint Powers Authority Update		Page 119
<i>ESJPA Chair, Supervisor Lori Parlin, El Dorado County</i>		
<i>Staci Heaton, Senior Policy Advocate/ESJPA Deputy Executive Director</i>		
III. Other Regulatory Issues		
<i>Governmental Affairs Staff</i>		
b. Legislative Matters (<i>Discussion and possible action relative to</i>)		
I. State and Federal Legislative Update		Page 123
<i>Mary-Ann Warmerdam, Senior Vice President Governmental Affairs</i>		
II. Other Legislative Issues		
c. Water and Natural Resources Matters (<i>Discussion and possible action relative to</i>)		
I. Water Issues Update		Page 141
<i>Eric Will, Policy Advocate</i>		
II. Other Water and Natural Resources Issues		
d. Other Governmental Affairs Matters		
I. Ad Hoc Committee Updates		
1. Recruitment and Retention Ad Hoc Committee Update		Page 145
<i>Supervisor Miles Menetrey, Mariposa County, Recruitment and Retention Ad Hoc Committee Chair</i>		
<i>(Staff: Sarah Dukett, Senior Policy Advocate)</i>		
2. Predatory Species Management Ad Hoc Committee Update and Recommended Amendments to RCRC Policy Principles - ACTION		Page 147
<i>Supervisor Bob Nelson, Santa Barbara County, Predatory Species Management Ad Hoc Committee Chair</i>		
<i>(Staff: Staci Heaton)</i>		
3. Establishment of Board of Directors Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on Sustainable Groundwater Management Act - ACTION		Page 153
<i>Chair, Supervisor Miles Menetrey, Mariposa County</i>		
<i>(Staff: Eric Will)</i>		
II. Summary of RCRC Roundtable with Former Los Angeles Mayor/ Assembly Speaker and Candidate for Governor Antonio Villaraigosa		Page 157
<i>Mary-Ann Warmerdam</i>		
13. Announcements		
a. January 21, 2026 - RCRC, GSFA & GSCA Board Meetings, Sacramento		
b. January 21, 2026 - RCRC Installation Reception, Sacramento		
c. January 22, 2026 - CSAC Executive Committee Meeting, Sacramento		
d. February 4-6, 2026 - CSAC Executive Committee Leadership Forum, San Diego County		

- e. February 11, 2026 - RCRC, GSFA & GSCA Executive Committee Meetings (et al.), Sacramento
- f. February 11, 2026 – GSNR Board Meeting, Sacramento
- g. February 12, 2026 - CSAC Board of Directors Meeting, Sacramento
- h. February 21-24, 2026 - NACo Legislative Conference, Washington, DC
- i. TBD - CSAC Executive Committee Meeting, Los Angeles County
- j. March 25, 2026 - RCRC, GSFA & GSCA Board Meetings, Sacramento
- k. March 26, 2026 - ESJPA Board Meeting, Sacramento
- l. TBD - CSAC Board of Directors Retreat, TBD

14. Adjournment

Agenda items will be taken as close as possible to the schedule indicated. Any member of the general public may comment on agenda items at the time of discussion. In order to facilitate public comment, please let staff know if you would like to speak on a specific agenda item. The agenda for this regular meeting of the RCRC Board of Directors was duly posted at its offices, 1215 K Street, Suite 1650, Sacramento, California, 72 hours prior to the meeting.

Any written materials related to an open session item on this agenda that are submitted to the RCRC Board of Directors less than 72 hours prior to the meeting, and that are not exempt from disclosure under the Public Records Act, will promptly be made available for public inspection at RCRC's principal office, 1215 K Street, Suite 1650, Sacramento, CA 95814, (916) 447-4806, during normal business hours, and on the RCRC website, <https://www.rcrcnet.org/meetings-and-events/>

Additional Teleconference Location(s)

Siskiyou County Siskiyou County Meeting Chambers 311 Fourth Street, 2nd Floor Yreka, CA 96097	Mariposa County Mariposa County Government Center 5100 Bullion Street Floor 2, Administration Mariposa, CA 95338
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY RCRC BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

January 21, 2026 – 9:00 a.m.

Consent Agenda – ACTION

The RCRC Board of Directors will consider the following items:

- a. [December 10, 2025 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes](#)
- b. [RCRC Resolution 26-01: RCRC Board Travel Policy](#)
- c. 2026 Appointments
 - I. [Designate One Member of the RCRC Board to Serve on the Golden State Natural Resources, Inc. \(GSNR\) Board of Directors](#)
 - II. [Designate First Deputy Chair and Second Deputy Chair of the RCRC Board to Serve on the Water and Natural Resources Matters, Regulatory Matters, and Legislative Matters](#)
 - III. [Rural Counties' Nominee to Serve on the National Association of Counties' Western Interstate Region Board](#)
 - IV. [Appointment of Two Members of the RCRC Board to Serve on the Rural Advancement Institute \(RAI\) Board](#)
- d. [RCRC 2026 Investment Policy Renewal](#)
- e. [RCRC Revised Pay Rate Schedules](#)
- f. Ad Hoc Committee Updates
 - I. [Carrier of Last Resort Ad Hoc Committee: Final Report and Next Steps](#)
 - II. [Williamson Act Ad Hoc Committee: Final Report Recommended Revisions and Next Steps](#)



- Maggie Chui
Director of Board Operations
(mchui@rcrcnet.org)
- Patrick Blacklock
President and CEO
(pblacklock@rcrcnet.org)
- Milena De Melo
Finance Director
(mdemelo@rcrcnet.org)
- Mary-Ann Warmerdam
Senior Vice President
Government Affairs
(mwarmerdam@rcrcnet.org)

BUSINESS AND ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

RCRC Resolution 26-02: Board of Directors Code of Conduct - ACTION

This item addresses RCRC Resolution 26-02: Board of Directors Code of Conduct, which includes the revisions recommended by the RCRC Executive Committee. The proposed resolution can be accessed [here](#).



- Patrick Blacklock
President and CEO
(pblacklock@rcrcnet.org)



MEMO

GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

California Public Utilities Commission Update

This item provides a general overview as well as the current status of the various issues that RCRC is involved with at the California Public Utilities Commission.



- Leigh Kammerich
Senior Policy Advocate
(lkammerich@rcrcnet.org)
- John Kennedy
Senior Policy Advocate
(jkennedy@rcrcnet.org)
- Tracy Rhine
Senior Policy Advocate
(trhine@rcrcnet.org)



[MEMO](#)

Environmental Services Joint Powers Authority Update



- Staci Heaton
Senior Policy Advocate
(sheaton@rcrcnet.org)



[MEMO](#)

This item provides a summary of the Rural Counties' Environmental Services Joint Powers Authority's (ESJPA) recent activities.

State & Federal Legislative Update

This item provides an update on issues being addressed at the state and federal level.



- Mary-Ann Warmerdam
Senior Vice President
Governmental Affairs
(mwarmerdam@rcrcnet.org)



[MEMO](#)

Water Issues Update



- Eric Will
Policy Advocate
(ewill@rcrcnet.org)



[MEMO](#)

This item provides an update on current issues involving California water policy.

Recruitment and Retention Ad Hoc Committee Update

This item provides the work of the Recruitment and Retention Ad Hoc Committee.



➤ Sarah Dukett
Senior Policy Advocate
(sdukett@rcrcnet.org)



[MEMO](#)

Predatory Species Management Ad Hoc Committee Update and Recommended Amendments to RCRC Policy Principles - ACTION



➤ Staci Heaton
Senior Policy Advocate
(sheaton@rcrcnet.org)



[MEMO](#)

This item provides the work of the Predatory Species Management Ad Hoc Committee, and provides amendment recommendations to the RCRC Policy Principles. The proposed amendments can be accessed [here](#).

Establishment of Board of Directors Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on Sustainable Groundwater Management Act - ACTION

This item addresses the establishment of Board of Directors Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. These efforts would assist in advocacy efforts in the 2027-28 legislative session and beyond.



➤ Eric Will
Policy Advocate
(ewill@rcrcnet.org)



[MEMO](#)

Summary of RCRC Roundtable with Former Los Angeles Mayor/Assembly Speaker and Candidate for Governor Antonio Villaraigosa



➤ Mary-Ann Warmerdam
Senior Vice President
Governmental Affairs
(mwarmerdam@rcrcnet.org)



[MEMO](#)

This item provides a summary of an RCRC roundtable meeting held on January 5, 2026, with former Los Angeles Mayor/Assembly Speaker and Candidate for Governor Antonio Villaraigosa.

Consent Agenda

Rural County Representatives of California
Board of Directors Meeting
December 10, 2025 – 8:00 a.m.
1215 K Street, Suite 1650
Sacramento, CA 95814

MINUTES

Presentation: University of California, Santa Barbara

Alan Murray, Wildfire Resilience Initiative, University of California, Santa Barbara, provided an informational presentation regarding the findings from the Rural Advancement Institute–commissioned report on fire and emergency medical services response capacity in rural California, titled *Fire and Emergency Medical Services Response Capacity in Rural Communities of California*.

Call to Order, Determination of Quorum and Self Introductions

Chair, Supervisor Geri Byrne, Modoc County, presided. Present were President and CEO Patrick Blacklock, General Counsel Arthur J. Wylene, and Director of Board Operations, Maggie Chui, clerk. Chair Byrne called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. A quorum was determined at that time. Those members present:

<u>Supervisor</u>	<u>County</u>
David Griffith	Alpine
Brian Oneto	Amador
Bill Connelly	Butte
Amanda Folendorf	Calaveras
Daurice Smith	Colusa
Darrin Short	Del Norte
Lori Parlin	El Dorado
Monica Rossman	Glenn
Rex Bohn	Humboldt
Jen Roeser	Inyo
Doug Verboon	Kings
EJ Crandell	Lake
Aaron Albaugh	Lassen
Robert Poythress	Madera
Miles Menetrey	Mariposa
Madeline Cline	Mendocino
Daron McDaniel	Merced
Geri Byrne	Modoc
Rhonda Duggan	Mono
Chris Lopez*	Monterey
Anne Cottrell	Napa
Sue Hoek	Nevada
Shanti Landon	Placer
Tom McGowan	Plumas

Mindy Sotelo	San Benito
John Peschong	San Luis Obispo
Bob Nelson	Santa Barbara
Kevin Crye	Shasta
Lee Adams	Sierra
Michael Kobseff	Siskiyou
Wanda Williams*	Solano
Mike Ziegenmeyer	Sutter
Matt Hansen	Tehama
Jill Cox	Trinity
Dennis Townsend	Tulare
Mike Holland	Tuolumne
Sheila Allen	Yolo
Gary Bradford	Yuba

Absent

Ryan Kelley	Imperial
James Gore	Sonoma

*Attendance via Zoom

Public Comment

None

Consent Agenda

- a. **September 19, 2025 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes**
- b. **RCRC 2026 Proposed Budget**
- c. **RCRC Contribution to the California Employers' Retiree Benefit Trust (CERBT)**
- d. **Rural Leadership Awards**
- e. **2026 Installation of Officers and Rural Leadership Awards Reception**
- f. **California Public Utilities Commission Update**

Chair, Supervisor Geri Byrne, Modoc County, called for approval of the above-listed consent agenda items.

Supervisor Rex Bohn, Humboldt County, motioned to approve the consent agenda items. Supervisor Michael Kobseff, Siskiyou County, seconded the motion. Motion passed with all Supervisors present voting "Aye," except:

Not Voting: Monterey County; Sutter County; Yolo County

RCRC Chair's Report

Chair, Supervisor Geri Byrne, Modoc County, welcomed supervisors to the December RCRC Board of Directors meeting.

Supervisor Byrne provided a brief recap on the recent Western Governors' Association Winter Meeting in mid-November, as well as the California State Association of Counties' Annual Meeting last week. During the CSAC Annual Meeting, Supervisor Byrne heard concerns about Sustainable Groundwater Management Act reporting requirements that impose unnecessary costs on moderate- and lower-end medium-priority basins not in overdraft, and is raising the issue to explore a potential solution. Supervisor Byrne invited the other RCRC Officers to share their perspectives on the event.

President's Report

Patrick Blacklock, President and CEO, provided a brief report on recent activities the organization is engaged in that align with the RCRC Strategic Plan goals, encompassing Equitable Access, Impactful Advocacy, Healthy Communities, and Operational Excellence.

Member County Concerns and Issues

Chair, Supervisor Geri Byrne, Modoc County, provided an opportunity for the RCRC Board of Directors to discuss their individual member county concerns and issues. RCRC staff will review the concerns and issues raised by RCRC Board Members and assess each item for possible plans of action. The RCRC Board of Directors heard from the following supervisors:

- Supervisor Mindy Sotelo, San Benito County, expressed concern about Proposition 1 and the behavioral health funding changes.
- Supervisor Daurice Smith, Colusa County, commended the county public health department for its efforts in managing jail health programs.
- Supervisor Gary Bradford, Yuba County, shared that the Yuba County Board of Supervisors approved a 5-year transportation master plan and expressed disappointment over fewer roadways in the plan due to declining gas tax revenues.
- Supervisor Monica Rossman, Glenn County, highlighted their public health programs and jail health initiatives.
- Supervisor Kevin Crye, Shasta County, noted progress on medical school residency programs, and highlighted cross-political collaboration and the county's alternative custody programs.
- Supervisor Sue Hoek, Nevada County, thanked RCRC staff for visiting the county and reviewing programs, including behavioral health, the new ranch project, and the navigation center.
- Supervisor Jill Cox expressed appreciation for the passage of the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) payments to counties, and the support involved.
- Supervisor Dennis Townsend, Tulare County, shared concerns about the In-Home Support Services penalties and affordability issues for counties.
- Supervisor Doug Verboon, Kings County, noted surface water delivery issues and related fiscal impositions.
- Supervisor Rex Bohn, Humboldt County, thanked RCRC staff for their consistent work and support of the organization and RCRC Member Counties.
- Supervisor Jen Roeser, Inyo County, expressed concern over the Federal Emergency Management Agency's reimbursement rates being 25–30 percent

lower for mutual aid, and noted the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) issues.

- Supervisor Madeline Cline, Mendocino County, emphasized the need to be proactive on SGMA in order to address medium-priority basins and large-scale water storage opportunities.
- Supervisor Mike Holland, Tuolumne County, discussed the importance of paying attention to road funding and local transportation priorities.
- Supervisor EJ Crandell, Lake County, praised Dr. Murray's presentation, and highlighted local fire department tax measures and Joint Power Authorities' coordination.
- Supervisor Bob Nelson, Santa Barbara County, expressed concerns regarding shrinking county budgets and potential state mandated program costs like indigent care.
- Supervisor Miles Menetrey, Mariposa County, noted concerns about park entry fees, tourism impacts, and challenges for local businesses affecting Mariposa County.
- Supervisor Daron McDaniel, Merced County, highlighted the success of Groundwater Sustainability Agencies' management of groundwater movement ordinances in Merced County.
- Supervisor Robert Poythress, Madera County, expressed frustration with the Department of Water Resources representatives, and discussed gas tax concerns.
- Supervisor Amanda Folendorf, Calaveras County, highlighted a major housing project supported by local taxes and private donors in Calaveras County.
- Supervisor Lori Parlin, El Dorado County, emphasized fire and emergency medical services issues as a huge concern for all counties. Supervisor Parlin also noted the importance of the RCRC Predatory Management Ad Hoc Committee.
- Supervisor Rhonda Duggan, Mono County, described the impacts of the Pack Fire in Mono County and efforts to get a declaration of emergency approved.
- Supervisor Aaron Albaugh, Lassen County, thanked Supervisor Byrne for her leadership as the RCRC Chair for 2025.
- Supervisor Michael Kobseff, Siskiyou County, noted concerns about plant closures, non-profit purchases of private agricultural land, and SGMA funding.
- Supervisor Tom McGowan, Plumas County, discussed changes related to county benefits.
- Supervisor Ned Coe, Modoc County, highlighted SGMA concerns, prioritizing basins, and future SRS plans.
- Supervisor Shanti Landon, Placer County, raised continued concerns about foreign entities owning agricultural land.
- Supervisor John Peschong, San Luis Obispo County, thanked Supervisor Byrne for her leadership.

Consider the Ascension of the Current First Vice Chair to Chair, and the Second Vice Chair to First Vice Chair

Patrick Blacklock explained the recommendation for the ascension of the Current First Vice Chair to Chair, and the Second Vice Chair to First Vice Chair, as follows:

2026 Chair	Supervisor Miles Menetrey, Mariposa County
2026 First Vice Chair	Supervisor Bob Nelson, Santa Barbara County

Staff Recommendation

It was recommended the RCRC Board of Directors take action to affirm the ascension of the Current First Vice Chair to Chair, and the Second Vice Chair to First Vice Chair as provided in Section 6.6 of the RCRC Bylaws, subject to consideration of additional nominations from the floor, if any.

Supervisor Rex Bohn, Humboldt County, motioned to approve ascension of Supervisor Menetrey to 2026 Chair, and Supervisor Nelson to 2026 First Vice Chair. Supervisor Daron McDaniel, Merced County, seconded the motion. Motion passed with all Supervisors present voting “Aye,” except:

Not Voting: Monterey County; Yolo County

*Supervisor Chris Lopez, Monterey County, joined the meeting at 10:06 a.m.

Election of the Second Vice Chair

Patrick Blacklock explained the election process for the Second Vice Chair position, and shared that Supervisor Monica Rossman, Glenn County, Supervisor Robert Poythress, Madera County, Supervisor Rhonda Duggan, Mono County, and Supervisor Anne Cottrell, Napa County, have stated their interest in the Second Vice Chair Officer position.

Supervisor Daron McDaniel, Merced County, motioned to nominate Supervisor Robert Poythress, Madera County, as the 2026 Second Vice Chair. Supervisor Doug Verboon, Kings County, seconded the nomination.

Supervisor Gary Bradford, Yuba County, motioned to nominate Supervisor Anne Cottrell, Napa County, as the 2026 Second Vice Chair. Supervisor Sue Hoek, Nevada County, seconded the nomination.

Supervisor Jen Roeser, Inyo County, motioned to nominate Supervisor Rhonda Duggan, Mono County, as the 2026 Second Vice Chair. Supervisor David Griffith, Alpine County, seconded the nomination.

Supervisor Matt Hansen, Tehama County, motioned to nominate Supervisor Monica Rossman, Glenn County, as the 2026 Second Vice Chair. Supervisor Kevin Crye, Shasta County, seconded the nomination.

Supervisor Monica Rossman, Glenn County, was given the opportunity to speak, during which she decided to withdraw her candidacy for the Second Vice Chair position this year.

Supervisors Robert Poythress (Madera County), Anne Cottrell (Napa County), and Rhonda Duggan (Mono County) expressed their interest in serving as the Second Vice Chair.

RCRC's 2026 Officer slate becomes effective January 1, 2026. The Officers will be sworn in on January 21, 2026.

Staff Recommendation

It was recommended the RCRC Board of Directors take action to elect the 2026 RCRC Second Vice Chair.

The vote was conducted by secret ballot in accordance with Section 6.11.1.2 of the RCRC Bylaws. Patrick Blacklock and Arthur J. Wylene, General Counsel, distributed one officer ballot for each member county joining in-person, and Maggie Chui, Director of Board Operations, distributed one electronic officer ballot for each member county joining virtually. Mr. Blacklock, Ms. Chui, and Mr. Wylene tabulated the votes for the Second Vice Chair position. After the tabulation was complete, Mr. Blacklock announced that Supervisor Cottrell had received a majority of all votes cast:

- 2026 Second Vice Chair, Supervisor Anne Cottrell, Napa County

Agenda items 8.a.II. (Election of the Second Vice Chair) and 8.a.III. (Election of the 2026–2027 Executive Committee) were formally approved by the RCRC Board of Directors as a single action, as detailed below.

Election of the 2026-2027 Executive Committee

Patrick Blacklock explained the election procedure for the 2026-2027 RCRC Executive Committee. Mr. Blacklock explained that RCRC Board Members selected will serve with the RCRC Officers to collectively comprise the RCRC Executive Committee for a two-year term (2026-2027).

Staff Recommendation

It was recommended that the RCRC Board of Directors caucus by region and take the action necessary to select the 2026-2027 RCRC Executive Committee Members from each of the five regions.

Supervisors from each region convened either virtually at a noticed teleconference location and/or in-person to caucus and selected a RCRC Board Member to serve on the RCRC Executive Committee. Representatives from each region reported the following selections for the 2026-2027 RCRC Executive Committee:

Region 1: Supervisor Madeline Cline, Mendocino County

Region 2: Supervisor Sue Hoek, Nevada County

Region 3: Supervisor Gary Bradford, Yuba County

Region 4: Supervisor David Griffith, Alpine County

Region 5: Supervisor John Peschong, San Luis Obispo County

Supervisor Daron McDaniel, Merced County, motioned to approve the 2026-2027 RCRC Executive Committee as set forth above, and approve Supervisor Anne Cottrell, Napa County, as the 2026 Second Vice Chair. Supervisor Rex Bohn, Humboldt County, seconded the motion. Motion passed with all Supervisors present voting “Aye,” except:

Not Voting: Monterey County; Yolo County

*Supervisor Chris Lopez, Monterey County, departed the meeting at 10:45 a.m.

RCRC Resolution 25-05: Approving an Exception to the 180-day Wait Period for Employing Retired Annuitant Barbara Hayes

Patrick Blacklock presented RCRC Resolution 25-05, which would approve an exception to the 180-day wait period to temporarily employ retired annuitant Barbara Hayes. This action supports continuity of operations by allowing Ms. Hayes, in her capacity as Chief Economic Development Officer, to provide extra-help support in implementing the Golden State Fiber Network program and in training staff.

Supervisor David Griffith, Alpine County, in his capacity as the Golden State Connect Authority's Vice Chair, presented Ms. Hayes with flowers and spoke about her contributions to GSCA's success. Ms. Hayes' formal retirement from RCRC is effective after December 31, 2025, and she has been invited to return to the RCRC Board of Directors meeting on January 21, 2026.

Recommendation

It was recommended that RCRC Board of Directors approve Resolution 25-05: Approving an Exception to the 180-Day Wait Period For Employing Retired Annuitant Barbara Hayes, Pursuant to Government Code Sections 7522.56 and 21224.

Supervisor Michael Kobseff, Siskiyou County, motioned to approve Resolution 25-05. Supervisor David Griffith, Alpine County, seconded the motion. Motion passed with all Supervisors present voting “Aye,” except:

Not Voting: Monterey County; Yolo County

The RCRC Board of Directors meeting recessed at 11:06 a.m. and reconvened at 1:00 p.m. During the recess, Supervisor Sheila Allen, Yolo County, arrived, and Supervisors Kevin Crye, Shasta County, and Wanda Williams, Solano County, departed the meeting.

Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Update

Tracy Rhine, Senior Policy Advocate, and Leigh Kammerich, Senior Policy Advocate, provided an update on three recent Federal Communications Commission (FCC)

activities on which RCRC has submitted comments. All proposals would increase federal preemption and limit local control, affecting areas such as network modernization, wireless infrastructure deployment, and wireline installations.

Water Issues Update

Eric Will, Policy Advocate, provided a brief update on current issues involving California's water policy. The update covered legislative and policy matters, including bills returning in 2026, potential discussions on Proposition 218 in the water sector, and the rollout of Proposition 4.

Following interest and discussion by the RCRC Board of Directors, SGMA and proactive strategies on water-related issues will be addressed at the next meeting.

Forest Management and Wildfire Update

Staci Heaton, Senior Policy Advocate, provided an update on legislative efforts and activities across various state and federal agencies. Ms. Heaton discussed the Prescribed Fire Executive Order, the California Department of Insurance Long-Term Solvency Regulation, the Zone 0 regulatory process, and the Fix Our Forests Act (S. 1492).

State and Federal Legislative Update

Mary-Ann Warmerdam, Senior Vice President Governmental Affairs, along with members of the Governmental Affairs Department, provided an update on key issues at both the state and federal levels.

At the state level, the update included an update on the 2025–26 Legislative Session, notable bills and policy updates, and an overview of 2026 statewide ballot measures. Sarah Dukett, Senior Policy Advocate, provided updates on indigent care and courts, while John Kennedy, Senior Policy Advocate, covered legislation and regulations related to solid waste management, CEQA, landfills, and single-use packaging.

At the federal level, discussion focused on the reauthorization of Secure Rural Schools payments for the 2024 and 2025 fiscal years, pending presidential approval.

Summary of RCRC Roundtable with Former State Controller and Candidate for Governor Betty Yee

Mary-Ann Warmerdam provided a summary of the RCRC roundtable held in mid-November with former State Controller and gubernatorial candidate Betty Yee. RCRC Executive Committee members Supervisors Gary Bradford (Yuba County), Anne Cottrell (Napa County), and Lori Parlin (El Dorado County) discussed a range of topics with Ms. Yee, including the importance of rural perspectives. RCRC staff are coordinating with other gubernatorial candidates to schedule additional roundtables.

Adjournment

Chair, Supervisor Geri Byrne, Modoc County, adjourned the RCRC Board of Directors Meeting at 2:19 p.m.



To: Members of the RCRC Board of Directors
From: Milena De Melo, Finance Director
Date: January 13, 2026
Re: RCRC Resolution 26-01: RCRC Board Travel Policy - **ACTION**

Background

RCRC has prepared a Travel Expense Policy for consideration and approval by the Board of Directors. Proposed changes to maximum reimbursement rates are highlighted below.

The Travel Policy has been updated to clarify travel by RCRC Delegates by commercial charter aircraft or by private aircraft owned or rented by Delegates is permitted, when such travel is determined to be necessary; with provisions for required approvals, safety, insurance, and cost-reasonableness requirements.

Policy Highlights

Lodging: The lodging maximum reimbursement rate per night is based on the official government per diem rates for Sacramento County as set by the General Services Administration (GSA) and remains at \$250 per night. RCRC staff will provide a list of hotels nearby that often publish rates below \$250 / night.

Meals: In addition, Section VI, "Meals," contains the following proposed meal allowance maximum reimbursements. These rates are also based on the official total \$86.00 per diem rates for Sacramento as set by the GSA:

MEAL to be REIMBURSED	PROPOSED RATE
Breakfast	\$22.00
Lunch	\$23.00
Dinner	\$41.00
Total Maximum Reimbursable by RCRC	\$86.00

Mileage: Each year, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) sets a rate for reimbursement of mileage for personally owned vehicles. For 2026, the standard mileage rate has been set at \$0.725, up from \$0.70 in 2025. The policy indicates that reimbursement will be at the prevailing IRS rate. If the IRS publishes any update, RCRC will revise the rate to reflect the current IRS published rate.

Recommendation

It is recommended that RCRC Board of Directors approve the proposed Board Travel Expense Policy, Resolution 26-01.

Attachment

- RCRC Resolution 26-01 – Travel Expense Policy for the Rural County Representatives of California Delegates and Alternates

RCRC RESOLUTION 26-01

TRAVEL EXPENSE POLICY FOR THE RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES OF CALIFORNIA DELEGATES and ALTERNATES

WHEREAS, the Rural County Representatives of California Board of Directors needs to establish rules and regulations concerning travel, lodging, and meals;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) that unless otherwise provided by law, the following rules and regulations shall govern RCRC business travel by RCRC delegates.

STATEMENT OF GENERAL POLICY

- A. It is recognized that members of Boards of Supervisors are reimbursed for business expenses by their respective counties. It is the intention of RCRC to encourage involvement in RCRC business by reimbursing RCRC delegates for certain RCRC-related expenses, as described herein. Such a policy is intended to augment county reimbursement, not fully replace it.
- B. Travel is limited to only those purposes which enhance the efficient and effective operation of RCRC.
- C. RCRC Delegates traveling on RCRC-related business shall do so by the most reasonable means available, both in terms of financial costs as a primary focus and productive utilization as a secondary consideration. It is also recognized that circumstances such as the distance to be traveled and the time necessary to travel, emergency situations, inclement weather conditions, etc., are all factors which may have significant impact in determining the allowance for the cost of travel.
- D. Authority to travel and reimbursements for customary and reasonable costs incurred for such travel including meals, transportation, registration, lodging, parking, and other related costs shall be in accordance with policy and procedures delineated herein.
- E. Only one voting member (either the Delegate or Alternate) representing each County per meeting will be reimbursed for Board Meeting attendance.
- F. All travel reimbursement claims must be submitted utilizing the RCRC Delegate travel claim form.

- G. In no case will a Delegate be reimbursed in an amount greater than provided in this resolution without approval of the President, Finance Director or an RCRC Senior Vice President.
- H. Reimbursement for commercial air travel will be at "coach" class cost, except where the RCRC President determines, in advance, that other travel arrangements are reasonable and necessary. (For purposes of this policy, "coach class" may include one checked and one carry-on bag, seat selection, and additional legroom, if offered as upgrades to a standard coach or economy class seat.)
- I. Travel by commercial charter aircraft or private aircraft owned or rented by Delegates will require prior authorization by the RCRC President. Generally, but not exclusively, such approval should be based on the relative benefit to RCRC and/or because other types of travel for a particular trip are not reasonable, appropriate or best suited to the circumstances, as determined by the RCRC President. Such travel, when approved by the RCRC President, is subject to the specific provisions set forth in Section III.
- J. Reimbursement associated with an RCRC Board Meeting or Executive Committee Meeting, attendance at the full meeting is required in order to be reimbursed.
- K. The cost of attendance at the Annual RCRC Meeting shall not be subject to any reimbursement by RCRC except when a Board Meeting is held at the Annual Meeting. In that event only those travel costs which are associated with attendance at that Board Meeting (mileage to and from the Board Meeting location and lodging the night prior to the Board Meeting) will be reimbursed to the Delegate or Alternate if the Delegate or Alternate actually attends the full Board Meeting.

I. TRAVEL DEFINITIONS

Travel in this policy is defined as travel that is necessary to complete RCRC business required by the organization in the performance of its primary function and/or in the course of the assigned duties. Travel for Delegates consists of roundtrip travel from their place of residence or office to attend such required events/activities.

Such travel events include, but are not limited to:

- Meetings or conferences required in the implementation or administration of new or ongoing RCRC program areas.
- Meetings, appearances, or other travel necessary to conduct RCRC business requested by the Board of Directors, Chair of the Board, RCRC President, RCRC Finance Director or an RCRC Senior Vice President.

II. REIMBURSABLE TRAVEL ACTIVITIES

RCRC and its Board recognize the importance of RCRC Officers and Delegates actively participating on behalf of RCRC in certain activities on RCRC business. Such activities occur both in California and outside California.

RCRC will reimburse for travel expenses, including transportation, meals and lodging at the levels approved in this policy, for such activities in the following circumstances:

1. The activity is either an RCRC Board or Executive Committee meeting and the attending person is an official Delegate or designated representative of RCRC.
2. Officer or appointee attendance of a meeting or conference of a body or organization of which RCRC is a member or participant, such as the National Association of Counties (NACO), Western Interstate Region (WIR), the CSAC Annual Conference, etc. and the attending person is an official Delegate or designated representative of RCRC.
3. The meeting is attended per appointment to an outside committee, council, etc. per RCRC Board Chair, Executive Committee and/or Board of Directors appointment as a designated representative of RCRC
4. The activity is official RCRC business and participation has been approved by the RCRC President or Senior Vice President of Governmental Affairs for legislative or policy meetings with State Legislators, Administration, Committees, and Agencies, members of Congress, federal agencies, or similar governmental bodies. Travel outside of California will require the approval of the RCRC Officers, the RCRC President, the RCRC Finance Director or an RCRC Senior Vice President as appropriate.
5. The activity is a conference or a necessary meeting in which RCRC has been invited to participate, and relates to subjects of interest to RCRC, as determined by the RCRC Board, the RCRC President, Finance Director or an RCRC Senior Vice President and the person designated to attend makes a report to RCRC regarding his or her activities on behalf of RCRC.
6. The participation of the particular RCRC Officers and Delegates is designated as official RCRC business by the RCRC President, Finance Director or an RCRC Senior Vice President.
7. The travel, lodging and meal expenses are in connection with the activities described above, and are not for personal or non-official purposes, such as entertainment or tourist related activities organized as part of a conference.

Reimbursements shall be made only upon supporting invoices, receipts and bills consistent with appropriate RCRC policies.

Notwithstanding the above, in no event shall RCRC make reimbursement for lavish expenses for travel, lodging or meals; provided, however, that if the prevailing levels of lodging expenses exceed prevailing per diem levels, RCRC may reimburse for such expenses upon a determination of the RCRC President, Finance Director or an RCRC Senior Vice President that the location, prevailing costs of lodging, or business necessity required more expensive lodging or meals.

RCRC Officers and Delegates who are public officials under Government Code Section 87200 or are designated employees of a governmental agency, including but not limited to an RCRC-affiliated Joint Powers Authority, will be required to report payments as income on their FPPC Form 700 Statement of Economic Interests. RCRC will provide to such persons annually a listing of reimbursements for these reporting purposes.

III. LICENSE, INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS AND MEANS OF TRAVEL

Licenses - All RCRC Delegates operating any vehicle used in the performance of RCRC-related business must possess a valid driver's license.

Insurance Requirements - Any Delegate who uses their personal vehicle, rental vehicle or government vehicle for travel on RCRC-related business shall carry insurance for personal injury or property damage at or above state mandated minimum levels at that time. Delegates not in compliance with these minimum standards shall not be authorized to drive their personal vehicle, rental vehicle or government vehicle on RCRC business. If requested, Delegate is required to provide proof of licensing and insurance.

Chartered Aircraft - Travel by commercial charter aircraft shall be limited to instances in which travel by scheduled airline is impractical or more expensive. Delegates may be eligible to use charter flights if the cost of the charter is less than the cost of commercial airfare for travelers essential to the trip. Travelers are encouraged to investigate the use of charter aircraft if three or more persons are traveling from the same origin to the same destination within California. If approved, chartered flights may only be obtained from an FAA certificated charter operator.

Private Aircraft - Private aircraft owned or rented by an RCRC Delegate and flown in the performance of RCRC-related business must have current "Standard" airworthiness certificates issued by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and the pilot in command must hold a currently effective pilot's certificate issued by the FAA and must have a current rating for the aircraft flown. Before any private aircraft owned by an RCRC Delegate is flown on RCRC business, a current certificate of insurance covering the aircraft in the minimum amount of \$1,000,000 must be filed

with the RCRC Finance Director. RCRC's General Liability and Excess Liability policies exclude aircraft.

IV. MILEAGE CALCULATION AND REIMBURSEMENT

Mileage Calculation - Roundtrip mileage is to be calculated from the Delegate's principal place of employment or home to the destination. Any special circumstances which inflate the normal mileage should be accompanied by an explanation in the expense claim and are subject to denial.

Mileage Reimbursement Rate - Authorized private vehicle usage for RCRC business travel will be reimbursed at the rate allowed under prevailing Internal Revenue Service rules and regulations as maintained by RCRC.

Aircraft Travel - Approved commercial charter flights will be reimbursed at the actual cost of the service as supported by validated receipts. Reimbursement to Delegates for use of private aircraft owned or rented and flown to travel destination, if approved, will be on the basis of actual cost as supported by validated receipts, or hourly rates approved in advance by the RCRC Finance Director. For purposes of these rules, landing and tie down fees are defined as reimbursable expenses. .

Other Forms of Travel - RCRC Delegate's choosing to utilize another form of travel, such as train or other transit, shall be reimbursed at the same rate as if travel occurred as addressed in the Statements of General Policy. Item C. states RCRC Delegates traveling on RCRC-related business shall do so by the most reasonable means available, both in terms of financial costs as a primary focus and productive utilization as a secondary consideration. And Item H: Reimbursement for commercial air travel will be at "coach" class cost, except where the RCRC President determines, in advance, that other travel arrangements are reasonable and necessary. (For purposes of this policy, "coach class" may include one checked and one carry-on bag, seat selection, and additional legroom, if offered as upgrades to a standard coach or economy class seat.)

V. LODGING

Hotel Allowance - Delegates should seek the lowest cost accommodation reasonably available for the intended travel. For lodging in the Sacramento area, RCRC will reimburse lodging expense, inclusive of room rate, occupancy tax and other fees, up to a maximum of \$250 per night. If RCRC has arranged a block of rooms for the event and the cost of the room within that block is greater than \$250, RCRC will reimburse the cost of the room at the block rate. Delegates are charged with using reasonable care and judgment in regard to whether overnight accommodations are required for their participation.

Guidelines regarding the need for overnight accommodations are as follows:

- For a two-day meeting/event when one-way travel from place of residence or office to the meeting/event is more than 75 miles or if travel will take more than 1 to 1 ½ hours;
- For a one-day meeting/event when one-way travel from place of residence or office is more than 150 miles or if travel will take longer than 2 hours; or
- In circumstances when the delegate needs to remain in Sacramento to participate at an RCRC associated event that will end later than 6:30 pm or in an early meeting the following morning.
- When participation in RCRC business requires arrival the night before for a meeting in Sacramento that begins at 8:00 am or earlier.

For accommodation reimbursement associated with an RCRC Board Meeting or Executive Committee Meeting, attendance at the full meeting is required in order to be reimbursed.

Transient Occupancy Tax - Occupancy tax can sometimes be waived by the motel/hotel dependent upon local regulation. Delegates traveling should always inquire about an exemption when appropriate.

VI. MEALS

Meal Allowances - Meal allowances (total of \$86.00 per day) will be reimbursed at the following rate, however, receipts must be provided:

- | | |
|-------------|---------|
| • Breakfast | \$22.00 |
| • Lunch | \$23.00 |
| • Dinner | \$41.00 |

Delegates will not be reimbursed for meals if the cost of a meal is included in the conference fee either reimbursed or paid directly by RCRC. Delegates will not be reimbursed for meals that are provided at RCRC events or meetings.

Meal Times - Delegates are charged with using reasonable care and judgment in regard to reimbursements. Reasonable times are generally considered to be departure prior to 7:00 a.m. for breakfast and return to residence after 6:00 p.m. for dinner.

Meal Limitations - Reimbursement will not include alcoholic beverages regardless of meal type or captive nature. Gratuities are capped at 15% of the cost of the meal.

Captive Meal - Captive refers specifically to those instances where a Delegate must/should participate in a dining event as part of an agendized event. Required group meetings, gatherings or functions for which meal allowances will be claimed for breakfasts, luncheons or dinners and which are of a captive nature shall be

reimbursed at actual cost even though it exceeds those amounts set forth under Meal Allowances. Expense claims for meals at such meetings, gatherings or functions (captive meals) will state the captive nature of the meal for which the expense claim is being presented.

Fixed Prices - When attendance at official meetings or conventions forces fixed prices, the claimant must list the items separately on the claim form as "Official Banquet" or other such language and the amount thereof. In this event, all such items will be supported by receipts verifying such charges. If supporting documents are not obtainable, then a statement to this effect will be made by the claimant. The RCRC President or Finance Director reserves the right to deny any undocumented expenses.

VII. EXPENSE DOCUMENTATION

Receipt Requirements - Receipts must be provided for reimbursable expenses including the following:

- All lodging expenses paid at actual cost. There is \$250 per night maximum in the Sacramento area, inclusive of room rate, taxes and fees.
- All meal expenses.
- Registration fees (only if not prepaid by RCRC).
- Telephone calls related to RCRC business in excess of \$2.50 per trip.
- Fax charges for RCRC related business in excess of \$2.50 per trip.
- Taxi/Bus/Ride-share fare in excess of \$5.00 per travel period.
- Car Rental.
- Commercial Air Travel (use ticket stub or electronic itinerary).
- Other common carrier (use ticket stub).
- Commuter bus fare (i.e. Airporter service).
- Toll Charges in excess of \$6.00.
- "Captive Meal" and "Fixed Prices" as described in Section VI (a written explanation of circumstances and approval by the RCRC President or Finance Director can suffice).
- Parking, at standard parking rates for City visited.

VIII. NON-REIMBURSABLE PERSONAL EXPENSE

Personal Expense - Any and all expenses that are for the direct personal needs of the Delegate, except as otherwise identified as reimbursable under this document, are not reimbursable by RCRC. Examples of such non-reimbursable items are listed below. This is not intended to be an all-inclusive list.

- Personal telephone calls, internet charges and personal fax transmissions
- Alcoholic Beverages
- Entertainment (including related transportation costs)

- Violations of legal requirements

IX. CLAIM PROCESS

Completed claim forms are to be submitted to RCRC within thirty (30) days after the completion of the trip/expense. Failure to adhere to the filing deadline may result in the denial of the reimbursement claim.

The claim form must include the purpose of the trip/expense, and the inclusive dates. All expenditures must be itemized and all claims will include receipts for expenses as detailed earlier under the section titled **EXPENSE DOCUMENTATION**.

The claim information must include all expenses of the trip whether or not they were paid directly to a vendor. The claim form is intended to be a recap of the complete trip as a reconciliation of all expenses and a central location for all receipts. Those items paid in advance or by credit card should be duly noted.

Secretary's Certificate

I certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate description of action taken at a properly constituted meeting of the Board of Directors of the Rural County Representatives of California on January 21, 2026.

Secretary's Signature



To: Members of the RCRC Board of Directors

From: Chair, Supervisor Miles Menetrey, Mariposa County
Patrick Blacklock, President and CEO

Date: January 13, 2026

Re: Designate One Member of the RCRC Board to Serve on the Golden State Natural Resources, Inc. (GSNR) Board of Directors - **ACTION**

Summary

This item is an annual action that would designate one member of the RCRC Board of Directors to serve on the Board of Directors of the Golden State Natural Resources (GSNR) nonprofit corporation for a two-year term.

Background

Section 5(e) of the GSNR Bylaws provides that GSNR's Board will include "two members of the Board of Directors of RCRC, designated by the RCRC Board." The designated directors serve two-year terms of office, which are staggered so that term of one director expires on January 31st of each year. Directors may be reappointed for additional terms without term limits, and can also be removed or replaced by the RCRC Board at any time.

The RCRC Chair, Supervisor Miles Menetrey, Mariposa County, has recommended the following RCRC Board Member be designated to serve on the Golden State Natural Resources, Inc. Board of Directors:

Geri Byrne	Modoc County
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The director's term will commence on February 1, 2026 and expire on January 31, 2028.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the RCRC Board designate one member to serve on the GSNR Board of Directors for a two-year term.



To: Members of the RCRC Board of Directors

From: Chair, Supervisor Miles Menetrey, Mariposa County
Patrick Blacklock, President and CEO

Date: January 13, 2026

Re: Designate First Deputy Chairs and Second Deputy Chairs of the RCRC Board for Water and Natural Resources Matters, Regulatory Matters, and Legislative Matters - **ACTION**

Summary

The RCRC Bylaws (Section 6.11.12) state that Deputy Chairs may be appointed by the RCRC Chair, subject to confirmation by the Board, to preside during designated portions of an RCRC Board of Directors meeting.

In accordance with the Bylaws and historic practice, First and Second Deputy Chairs for (1) Legislative Matters, (2) Regulatory Matters, and (3) Water and Natural Resources Matters are each appointed annually by the Chair in January, subject to approval by the Board of Directors.

Deputy Chairs supplement the work of the Board of Directors and are responsible to become knowledgeable in their assigned policy matter area, and to lead Board and staff discussion on these topics.

The RCRC Chair, Supervisor Miles Menetrey, Mariposa County, has appointed the following RCRC Board Members to serve as the First Deputy Chairs and Second Deputy Chairs:

Water and Natural Resources Matters		
First Deputy Chair	Dennis Townsend	Tulare County
Second Deputy Chair	Jen Roeser	Inyo County

Regulatory Matters		
First Deputy Chair	Rhonda Duggan	Mono County
Second Deputy Chair	Monica Rossman	Glenn County

Legislative Matters		
First Deputy Chair	John Peschong	San Luis Obispo County
Second Deputy Chair	Lee Adams	Sierra County

Recommendation

It is recommended that the RCRC Board of Directors confirm the RCRC Chair's appointments of First Deputy Chairs and Second Deputy Chairs of the RCRC Board for Water and Natural Resources Matters, Regulatory Matters, and Legislative Matters, respectively.



To: Members of the RCRC Board of Directors

From: Chair, Supervisor Miles Menetrey, Mariposa County
Patrick Blacklock, President and CEO

Date: January 13, 2026

Re: Rural Counties' Nominee to Serve on the National Association of Counties' Western Interstate Region Board – **Informational Item**

Summary

Traditionally, the incoming RCRC Chair nominates an RCRC Board Member to serve as the National Association of Counties' Western Interstate Region Board rural county nominee.

The RCRC Chair, Supervisor Miles Menetrey, Mariposa County, has nominated the following RCRC Board Member for this role:

Rex Bohn	Humboldt County
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Recommendation

No action needed.



To: Members of the RCRC Board of Directors

From: Chair, Supervisor Miles Menetrey, Mariposa County
Patrick Blacklock, President and CEO

Date: January 13, 2026

Re: Appointment of Two Members of the RCRC Board to Serve on the Rural Advancement Institute (RAI) Board – **Informational Item**

Summary

The Rural Advancement Institute (RAI) Bylaws (Section 5.3) state that the number of directors shall be seven, and further provide that the directors must be persons with expertise in subject areas encompassed by the corporation's specific purposes. Section 5.5 addresses the specific make-up of the seven RAI directors. In summary, the directors are to be as follows:

- **RCRC Chair Director:** The chairperson of RCRC shall serve as a member of the Board. This individual shall have the discretion to appoint a member of the RCRC Board of Directors to serve in his/her place.
- **RCRC President/CEO Director:** The RCRC President/CEO shall serve as a member of the Board.
- **RCRC Designated Directors:** The RCRC chairperson shall appoint two (2) members of the Board of Directors of RCRC to serve as members of the Board
- **At-large Directors:** The other three (3) directors shall be elected by the majority vote of the directors then in office. The term of office for each at-large director shall be three (3) years, and the terms shall be staggered so that one expires each year (on January 1).

Further, Section 5.5(d) states: The chair and vice chair of the Board shall be appointed annually by the RCRC Chair Director and each shall be from among the three members of the Board of Directors of RCRC.

The RCRC Chair Director, Supervisor Miles Menetrey, Mariposa County, has appointed the following RCRC Board Members to serve as RCRC designated directors:

Aaron Albaugh	Lassen County
Shanti Landon	Placer County

Recommendation

No action needed.



To: Members of the RCRC Board of Directors
From: Milena De Melo, Finance Director
Date: January 13, 2026
Re: RCRC 2026 Investment Policy Renewal - **ACTION**

Summary

The Investment Committee is responsible for overseeing the investment activity of RCRC and annually presents the Investment Policy to the Board for review and approval.

Issue

The Investment Policy was last revised and approved in January 2025. This policy aims to guide our investment decisions, ensuring alignment with our overall goals, risk tolerance, and regulatory requirements. The Investment Committee, which consists of the RCRC President, Finance Director, and Senior Vice President, has reviewed the policy and is submitting it for annual review as required. There have been no changes to the policy from the prior year.

The Investment Policy has been amended to authorize the use of Guaranteed Investment Contracts (GICs) for the investment of bond proceeds, to include both project and reserve funds. GICs provide a secure, fixed-rate investment vehicle that aligns with the project's financing structure and ensures stable earnings on said proceeds.

Staff Recommendation

It is recommended that the RCRC Board of Directors review and approve the attached RCRC 2026 Investment Policy.

Attachment

- 2026 Rural County Representatives of California Investment Policy

RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES OF CALIFORNIA
INVESTMENT POLICY
January 21, 2026

INTRODUCTION

The investment policies and practices of Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) are based upon state law and other legal requirements.

SCOPE

This policy provides guidelines for and applies to the investment of all RCRC's funds including cash.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES:

The primary objectives of investment activities shall be safety, liquidity and return, in that order of priority:

1. *Safety*

Investments shall be undertaken in a manner that seeks to ensure the preservation of capital in the overall portfolio. The objective will be to mitigate credit risk and interest rate risk.

a. Credit Risk

RCRC will minimize credit risk, which is the risk of loss of all or part of the investment due to the failure of the security issuer or backer, by:

- Limiting investments to the types of securities listed in this Investment Policy
- Pre-qualifying and conducting ongoing due diligence of the financial institutions, broker/dealers, intermediaries, and advisers with which RCRC will do business in accordance with this investment policy.
- Diversifying the investment portfolio so that the impact of potential losses from any one type of security or from any one individual issuer will be minimized.

b. Interest Rate Risk

RCRC will minimize interest rate risk, which is the risk that the market value of securities in the portfolio will fall due to changes in market interest rates, by:

- Structuring the investment portfolio so that security maturities match cash requirements for ongoing operations, thereby avoiding the need to sell securities on the open market prior to maturity
- Investing operating funds primarily in shorter-term securities, money market mutual funds, or similar investment pools and limiting individual security maturity as well as the average maturity of the portfolio in accordance with this policy.

2. *Liquidity*

The investment portfolio shall remain sufficiently liquid to meet all operating requirements that may be reasonably anticipated. This is accomplished by structuring the portfolio so that securities mature concurrent with cash needs to meet anticipated demands. Furthermore, since all possible cash demands cannot be anticipated, the portfolio should consist largely of securities with active secondary or resale markets. Alternatively, a portion of the portfolio may be placed in money market mutual funds or local government investment pools which offer same-day liquidity for short-term funds.

3. Return

The investment portfolio shall be designed with the objective of attaining a market rate of return throughout budgetary and economic cycles, taking into account the investment risk constraints and liquidity needs. Return on investment is of tertiary importance compared to the safety and liquidity objectives described above. The core investments are limited to relatively low risk securities in anticipation of earning a fair return relative to the risk being assumed. Securities shall generally be held until maturity with the following exceptions:

- A security with declining credit may be sold early to minimize loss of principal;
- Selling a security and reinvesting the proceeds that would improve the quality, yield, or target duration in the portfolio may be undertaken;
- Unanticipated liquidity needs of the portfolio require that the security be sold.

These objectives can be accomplished through diversity of instruments to include those with active secondary markets, maturities that match expected cash needs, and the Local Agency Investment Fund (LAIF) and CalTrust which includes diverse investment portfolios and immediate withdrawal provisions. The investment objective shall be to achieve a rate of return that is commensurate with safety and liquidity requirements of the organization. Management of the Investment portfolio will be directed by the objectives of Preservation of Capital – understanding that losses may occur on individual securities; Risk Aversion - understanding that risk is present in all types of investment; and Adherence to Investment Discipline, adhering to this policy.

Subject to the safety and liquidity priorities set forth above, the portfolio's target total return should meet or exceed all of the following over a full market cycle (at least 5 years):

- California's Local Agency Investment Fund (LAIF) rate for the same period.
- The 90 day Treasury Bill rate for the same period.

Standards of Care

1. Prudence

The standard of prudence to be used shall be the "prudent investor" standard, as set forth in government Code section 53600.3, and shall be applied in the context of managing an overall portfolio. The Treasurer and other officers and employees involved in the investment process acting in accordance with written procedures and this investment policy and exercising due diligence shall be relieved of personal responsibility for an individual security's credit risk or market price changes, provided deviations from expectations are reported in a timely fashion and the liquidity and the sale of securities are carried out in accordance with the terms of this policy.

2. Ethics and Conflicts of Interest

Officers and employees involved in the investment process shall refrain from personal business activity that could conflict with the proper execution and management of the investment program, or that could impair their ability to make impartial decisions. Such officers and employees shall disclose any material interests in financial institutions with which RCRC conducts business and shall further disclose any personal financial/investment positions that could be related to the performance of RCRC's investment portfolio. All such disclosures, and any other legally required disclosures of income, gifts, and other financial interests, shall be made in accordance with the Political Reform Act and other applicable provisions of state law. Employees and officers involved in the investment process shall refrain from undertaking personal investment transactions with the same individual with whom business is conducted on behalf of RCRC.

Delegation of Authority

Authority to manage RCRC's investment program is derived from California Government Code sections 53600 et seq. and is renewed annually by actions of RCRC's Board of Directors (Board). By adoption of this investment policy, the Board delegates investment authority to the Treasurer in accordance with Government Code section 53607. The Treasurer shall only act in consultation with the President/Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and/or Vice President, as set forth herein. All investments require the approval of the Treasurer and concurrence of either the President/CEO or Vice President, provided that the Treasurer may delegate investment approval authority to the President/CEO and Vice President acting jointly. The Treasurer, in consultation with the President/CEO and Vice President as set forth above, shall be responsible for all investment transactions undertaken and shall act in accordance with established written procedures and internal controls for the operation of the investment program consistent with this investment policy. No person may engage in an investment transaction except as provided under the terms of this policy and the procedures established by the Treasurer. The Treasurer, in consultation with the President/CEO and Vice President as set forth above, shall be responsible for all transactions undertaken and shall establish a system of controls to regulate these activities.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE INVESTMENT CONSULTANT(S)

In the event the Treasurer determines to utilize an Investment Consultant, the Investment Consultant's role will be that of a non-discretionary advisor to the Treasurer and other officers and employees involved in the investment process. Investment advice concerning the investment management of assets will be offered by the Investment Consultant, and will be consistent with the investment objectives, policies, guidelines and constraints as established in this statement.

LIQUIDITY

To minimize the possibility of a loss occasioned by the sale of a security forced by the need to meet a required payment, the Treasurer will monitor expected net cash flow requirements.

To maintain the ability to deal with unplanned cash requirements that might arise, the Treasurer, in consultation with the President/CEO and Vice President as set forth above, will determine the portion of assets that shall be maintained in cash or cash equivalents, including money market funds or short-term U.S. Treasury bills.

MARKETABILITY OF ASSETS

The Treasurer may require that all assets be invested in liquid securities, defined as securities that can be transacted quickly and efficiently, with minimal impact on market price.

AUTHORIZED AND SUITABLE INVESTMENTS

RCRC is empowered to invest in LAIF, CalTRUST and, as provided in Government Code (GC) Section 53600 et seq., to invest in the following types of securities, subject to the limitations upon quality, maturity, and portfolio percentage set forth therein:

1. Specific Authorizations

- Bonds, notes, warrants, or other evidences of indebtedness of a local agency within this state, including RCRC.
- Notes and other securities of RCRC affiliated companies when that note or security meets the requirements of any of the securities listed in GC Section 53601 and this policy, provided that any

such transaction shall be reviewed by counsel to ensure compliance with applicable laws pertaining to conflicts of interest.

- Guaranteed Investment Contracts (GICs) are an authorized investment for any bond proceeds (including project, reserve, and comparable funds) if permitted under the bond transaction documents, from providers rated a minimum of “AA” by a Nationally Recognized Statistical Rating Organization (NRSRO). Collateralization requirements shall be determined at the time the investment agreement is made, based on market conditions and RCRC’s objectives.

2. Cash Equivalents

- U.S. Treasury obligations which carry the full faith and credit guarantee of the United States Government
- Shares of beneficial interest issued by diversified management companies that are money market funds registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (“Money Market Funds”)
- Banker’s Acceptances
- Repurchase Agreements
- Certificates of Deposit and other evidences of deposit at financial institutions, subject to any applicable collateralization requirements.

3. Fixed Income Securities

- U.S. Government and Agency Securities that have a liquid market with a readily determinable market value
- Medium-term Corporate Notes
- A mortgage passthrough security, collateralized mortgage obligation, mortgage-backed or other pay-through bond ("Mortgage Backed Security")
- Treasury notes or bonds of the State of California or of any of the other 49 states.

4. Mutual Funds

- a. Shares of beneficial interest issued by diversified management companies that invest in securities as allowed in this statement (“Mutual Funds”), regulated by the Securities and Exchange Commission and whose portfolios consist only of dollar-denominated securities

Collateralization:

Where required by governing legislation, full collateralization will be required on all demand deposit accounts, including checking accounts and non-negotiable certificates of deposit.

ASSET ALLOCATION

Sections 53601 and 53601.1 of the California Government Code provide legal authorization for investment of funds of local agencies. All investments of RCRC shall conform to the restrictions of those laws and shall be consistent with prudent and conservative investment standards.

1. The Treasurer, in consultation with the President/CEO and Vice President as set forth above, will determine the Aggregate Fund Asset Allocation (allocation) giving consideration to resources, operating needs and economic conditions. The Treasurer will monitor the allocation and take steps to balance the allocation as appropriate.

2. Should an investment percentage-of-portfolio limitation be exceeded due to an incident such as fluctuation in portfolio size, the affected securities may be held to maturity to avoid losses. When no loss is indicated, the Treasurer shall consider rebalancing the portfolio, basing the decision, in part, on the expected length of time the portfolio will be unbalanced.
3. In order to achieve a prudent level of portfolio diversification, the securities of any one company or government agency or particular industry should not be excessive as determined by the Treasurer. The total allocation to treasury bonds and notes may represent up to 100% of the aggregate bond position

AUTHORIZED FINANCIAL DEALERS AND INSTITUTIONS

The Treasurer will maintain a list of financial institutions authorized to provide investment services. No public deposit shall be made except in a qualified public depository as established by State of California laws.

In addition, a list will also be maintained of approved security broker/dealers selected by factors that will include credit worthiness and may also include other factors, such as FINRA broker check, who are authorized to provide investment services in the State of California. These may include primary dealers or regional dealers.

All financial institutions and broker/dealers who desire to be approved for providing investment services must provide the Treasurer with the following:

- Audited financial statements
- Proof of National Association of Security Dealers certification
- Trading resolution
- Proof of State of California registration
- Certification of having read RCRC's investment policy and depository contracts

An annual review of the financial condition and registrations of approved security broker/dealers utilized by RCRC will be conducted by the Treasurer.

SAFEKEEPING AND CUSTODY

1. Delivery vs. Payment

All trades of marketable securities will be executed by delivery vs. payment (DVP) to ensure that securities are deposited in an eligible custody account prior to the release of funds.

2. Safekeeping

Securities will be held by an independent third-party custodian selected by the Treasurer as with all securities held in RCRC's name. The safekeeping institution shall annually provide a copy of their most recent report on internal controls (Statement of Auditing Standards No. 70, or SAS 70).

3. Internal Controls

The Treasurer shall establish a system of internal controls, which shall be documented in writing. The controls shall be designed to prevent the loss of public funds arising from fraud, employee error, misrepresentation by third parties, unanticipated changes in financial markets, or imprudent actions by employees and officers of RCRC.

INVESTMENT PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND EVALUATION

The Treasurer shall ensure that performance reports are compiled at least quarterly. The market value of the portfolio shall be calculated, and an investment report shall be prepared at least quarterly for presentation to the RCRC Executive Committee. The report shall include the following:

- Listing of individual investments held at the end of the reporting period, showing institution, selling institution, date of maturity, amount of deposit, and current market value
- Realized and unrealized gains or losses resulting from appreciation or depreciation
- Return on investment expressed as an annual percentage rate
- Average weighted yield to maturity of portfolio as compared to applicable benchmarks
- Statement of current allocation of investments

The Investment performance of total portfolios, as well as asset class components, will be measured against commonly accepted performance benchmarks. Consideration shall be given to the extent to which the investment results are consistent with the investment objectives, goals, and guidelines as set forth in this statement. The Treasurer will evaluate the portfolio(s) over at least a three year period.

INVESTMENT POLICY REVIEW

The investment policy shall be reviewed and approved annually by the Board of Directors in accordance with Government Code Section 53646.



To: Members of the Board of Directors
From: Milena De Melo, Finance Director
Date: January 14, 2026
Re: RCRC 2021-2026 Revised Pay Rate Schedules - **ACTION**

Summary

Annually, RCRC is required to approve a pay rate schedule for all positions that participate in CalPERS. The most recent pay rate schedule was approved by the Executive Committee and Board of Directors in conjunction with the approval of the 2026 annual budget.

Issue

The RCRC 2026 pay rate schedule was determined by CalPERS to require revision pursuant to California Code of Regulations, Title 2, Section 570.5(a)(6), in order to clearly specify the effective date of the listed compensation rates. Accordingly, RCRC is amending the 2026 pay rate schedule for full compliance with the applicable regulatory requirements as advised by CalPERS.

To prevent any potential impact on future retirees, RCRC also amended the pay rate schedules for the prior five years (2021 through 2025), as CalPERS retirement benefit calculations consider an employee's compensation during the final five years of service. These amendments are intended to ensure transparency, accuracy, and full alignment with CalPERS regulatory and audit standards as interpreted by CalPERS.

No other changes were made to the pay rate schedules for the years 2021 through 2026.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the RCRC Board of Directors approve the revised pay rate schedules for the periods from 2021 through 2026.

Attachments

- Attachment A.1 - RCRC Pay Schedule 2026 (Clean)
- Attachment A.2 - RCRC Pay Schedule 2026 (Track Changes)
- Attachment B.1 - RCRC Pay Schedule 2025 - Revised (Clean)
- Attachment B.2 - RCRC Pay Schedule 2025 - (Track Changes)
- Attachment C.1 - RCRC Pay Schedule 2025 (Clean)
- Attachment C.2 - RCRC Pay Schedule 2025 (Track Changes)

- Attachment D.1 - RCRC Pay Schedule 2024 (Clean)
- Attachment D.2 - RCRC Pay Schedule 2024 (Track Changes)
- Attachment E.1 - RCRC Pay Schedule 2023 (Clean)
- Attachment E.2 - RCRC Pay Schedule 2023 (Track Changes)
- Attachment F.1 - RCRC Pay Schedule 2022 - Revised (Clean)
- Attachment F.2 - RCRC Pay Schedule 2022 - Revised (Track Changes)
- Attachment G.1 - RCRC Pay Schedule 2022 (Clean)
- Attachment G.2 - RCRC Pay Schedule 2022 (Track Changes)
- Attachment H.1 - RCRC Pay Schedule 2021 - Revised (Clean)
- Attachment H.2 - RCRC Pay Schedule 2021 - Revised (Track Changes)
- Attachment I.1 - RCRC Pay Schedule 2021 (Clean)
- Attachment I.2 - RCRC Pay Schedule 2021 (Track Changes)

Rural County Representatives of California
Pay Schedule – Effective January 1, 2026

<u>Position/Title</u>	<u>Payrate Minimum</u>	<u>Payrate Maximum</u>	<u>Time Base</u>
President/CEO	\$295,000	\$525,500	Annual
Senior Vice President	\$235,000	\$465,000	Annual
Chief Economic Development Officer	\$165,000	\$330,000	Annual
General Counsel	\$165,000	\$375,000	Annual
Finance Director	\$165,000	\$310,000	Annual
Vice President of Business Development	\$175,000	\$275,000	Annual
Deputy Chief Economic Development Officer	\$145,000	\$290,000	Annual
Deputy General Counsel	\$140,000	\$275,000	Annual
Senior Policy Advocate	\$160,000	\$295,000	Annual
Policy Advocate	\$115,000	\$235,000	Annual
Outside Plant (OSP) Construction Management Lead	\$180,000	\$260,000	Annual
Operations Lead	\$180,000	\$260,000	Annual
Director of Data Management	\$125,000	\$260,000	Annual
Director of Forest Resiliency	\$125,000	\$225,000	Annual
IT Director	\$150,000	\$230,000	Annual
Economic Development Officer	\$ 80,000	\$190,000	Annual
Communications Director	\$133,000	\$197,000	Annual
Director of Marketing and Stakeholder Relations	\$ 85,000	\$165,000	Annual
Government Affairs Operations Manager	\$100,000	\$165,000	Annual
Director of Board Operations	\$ 88,000	\$180,000	Annual
Financial Planning and Administration Lead	\$130,000	\$185,000	Annual
Accounting Manager	\$ 82,000	\$165,000	Annual
Government Affairs Policy Analyst **	\$ 75,000	\$110,000	Annual
Management Analyst	\$ 50,000	\$100,000	Annual
Senior Program Administrator/Trainer	\$ 78,000	\$133,000	Annual
Program Administrator	\$ 66,000	\$121,000	Annual
Client Relations Representative	\$ 26.00	\$ 57.00	Hourly
Accountant *	\$ 31.00	\$ 58.00	Hourly
Office Manager *	\$ 24.00	\$ 41.00	Hourly

* Change in title only. Not a new position.

** New position added.

Rural County Representatives of California
Pay Schedule – Revised—Effective January 1, 2026

<u>Position/Title</u>	<u>Payrate Minimum</u>	<u>Payrate Maximum</u>	<u>Time Base</u>
President/CEO	\$295,000	\$525,500	Annual
Senior Vice President	\$235,000	\$465,000	Annual
Chief Economic Development Officer	\$165,000	\$330,000	Annual
General Counsel	\$165,000	\$375,000	Annual
Finance Director	\$165,000	\$310,000	Annual
Vice President of Business Development	\$175,000	\$275,000	Annual
Deputy Chief Economic Development Officer	\$145,000	\$290,000	Annual
Deputy General Counsel	\$140,000	\$275,000	Annual
Senior Policy Advocate	\$160,000	\$295,000	Annual
Policy Advocate	\$115,000	\$235,000	Annual
Outside Plant (OSP) Construction Management Lead	\$180,000	\$260,000	Annual
Operations Lead	\$180,000	\$260,000	Annual
Director of Data Management	\$125,000	\$260,000	Annual
Director of Forest Resiliency	\$125,000	\$225,000	Annual
IT Director	\$150,000	\$230,000	Annual
Economic Development Officer	\$ 80,000	\$190,000	Annual
Communications Director	\$133,000	\$197,000	Annual
Director of Marketing and Stakeholder Relations	\$ 85,000	\$165,000	Annual
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Accounting Manager	\$ 82,000	\$165,000	Annual
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Management Analyst	\$ 50,000	\$100,000	Annual
Senior Program Administrator/Trainer	\$ 78,000	\$133,000	Annual
Program Administrator	\$ 66,000	\$121,000	Annual
Client Relations Representative	\$ 26.00	\$ 57.00	Hourly
Accountant *	\$ 31.00	\$ 58.00	Hourly
Office Manager *	\$ 24.00	\$ 41.00	Hourly

* Change in title only. Not a new position.

** New position added.

Rural County Representatives of California
Pay Schedule – Revised – Effective April 1, 2025

<u>Position/Title</u>	<u>Payrate Minimum</u>	<u>Payrate Maximum</u>	<u>Time Base</u>
President/CEO	\$287,000	\$525,500	Annual
Senior Vice President	\$227,000	\$448,000	Annual
Chief Economic Development Officer	\$160,000	\$319,000	Annual
General Counsel	\$160,000	\$319,000	Annual
Finance Director	\$160,000	\$300,000	Annual
Vice President of Business Development*	\$140,000	\$250,000	Annual
Deputy Chief Economic Development Officer	\$139,000	\$281,000	Annual
Deputy General Counsel	\$134,000	\$265,000	Annual
Senior Policy Advocate	\$160,000	\$286,000	Annual
Policy Advocate	\$110,000	\$230,000	Annual
Outside Plan (OSP) Construction Management Lead **	\$175,000	\$250,000	Annual
Operations Lead **	\$175,000	\$225,000	Annual
Regulatory / Policy Analyst	\$110,000	\$211,000	Annual
Director of Local Assistance	\$110,000	\$211,000	Annual
Director of Data Management	\$120,000	\$250,500	Annual
Director of Forest Resiliency **	\$125,000	\$225,000	Annual
IT Director	\$145,000	\$225,000	Annual
Economic Development Officer	\$ 75,000	\$185,000	Annual
Communications Director	\$129,000	\$191,000	Annual
Director of Marketing and Stakeholder Relations	\$ 80,000	\$160,000	Annual
Government Affairs Operations Manager	\$ 96,000	\$160,000	Annual
Director of Board Operations	\$ 85,000	\$175,000	Annual
Financial Planning and Administration Lead **	\$125,000	\$175,000	Annual
Accounting Manager	\$ 80,000	\$160,000	Annual
Management Analyst	\$ 75,000	\$124,000	Annual
Senior Program Administrator/Trainer	\$ 75,000	\$127,000	Annual
Program Administrator	\$ 64,000	\$117,000	Annual
Client Relations Representative	\$ 25.00	\$ 55.00	Hourly
Accounting Clerk	\$ 30.00	\$ 55.00	Hourly
Office Coordinator	\$ 23.00	\$ 40.00	Hourly

* Change in title only. Not a new position.

** New position added.

Rural County Representatives of California
Pay Schedule – Revised – Effective April 1, 2025

<u>Position/Title</u>	<u>Payrate Minimum</u>	<u>Payrate Maximum</u>	<u>Time Base</u>
President/CEO	\$287,000	\$525,500	Annual
Senior Vice President	\$227,000	\$448,000	Annual
Chief Economic Development Officer	\$160,000	\$319,000	Annual
General Counsel	\$160,000	\$319,000	Annual
Finance Director	\$160,000	\$300,000	Annual
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Economic Development Officer	\$ 75,000	\$185,000	Annual
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Senior Program Administrator/Trainer	\$ 75,000	\$127,000	Annual
Program Administrator	\$ 64,000	\$117,000	Annual
Client Relations Representative	\$ 25.00	\$ 55.00	Hourly
Accounting Clerk	\$ 30.00	\$ 55.00	Hourly
Office Coordinator	\$ 23.00	\$ 40.00	Hourly

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** New position added.

Rural County Representatives of California
Pay Schedule – Effective January 1, 2025

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President/CEO	\$287,000	\$525,500	Annual
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Chief Economic Development Officer	\$160,000	\$319,000	Annual
General Counsel	\$160,000	\$319,000	Annual
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Senior Policy Advocate	\$160,000	\$286,000	Annual
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Director of Local Assistance	\$110,000	\$211,000	Annual
Director of Data Management	\$120,000	\$250,500	Annual
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IT Director	\$145,000	\$225,000	Annual
Economic Development Officer	\$ 75,000	\$185,000	Annual
Communications Director	\$129,000	\$191,000	Annual
Director of Marketing and Stakeholder Relations	\$ 80,000	\$160,000	Annual
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Director of Board Operations	\$ 85,000	\$175,000	Annual
Accounting Manager	\$ 80,000	\$160,000	Annual
Management Analyst	\$ 75,000	\$124,000	Annual
Senior Program Administrator/Trainer	\$ 75,000	\$127,000	Annual
Program Administrator	\$ 64,000	\$117,000	Annual
Client Relations Representative	\$ 25.00	\$ 55.00	Hourly
Accounting Clerk	\$ 30.00	\$ 55.00	Hourly
Office Coordinator	\$ 23.00	\$ 40.00	Hourly

* Change in title only. Not a new position.

** New position added.

Rural County Representatives of California
Pay Schedule – Effective January 1, 2025

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Chief Economic Development Officer	\$160,000	\$319,000	Annual
General Counsel	\$160,000	\$319,000	Annual
Finance Director	\$160,000	\$300,000	Annual
Vice President of Business Development*	\$140,000	\$250,000	Annual
Deputy Chief Economic Development Officer	\$139,000	\$281,000	Annual
Deputy General Counsel	\$134,000	\$265,000	Annual
Senior Policy Advocate	\$160,000	\$286,000	Annual
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Economic Development Officer	\$ 75,000	\$185,000	Annual
Communications Director	\$129,000	\$191,000	Annual
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Accounting Manager	\$ 80,000	\$160,000	Annual
Management Analyst	\$ 75,000	\$124,000	Annual
Senior Program Administrator/Trainer	\$ 75,000	\$127,000	Annual
Program Administrator	\$ 64,000	\$117,000	Annual
Client Relations Representative	\$ 25.00	\$ 55.00	Hourly
Accounting Clerk	\$ 30.00	\$ 55.00	Hourly
Office Coordinator	\$ 23.00	\$ 40.00	Hourly

* Change in title only. Not a new position.

** New position added.

Rural County Representatives of California
Pay Schedule – Effective January 1, 2024

<u>Position/Title</u>	<u>Payrate Minimum</u>	<u>Payrate Maximum</u>	<u>Time Base</u>
President/CEO	\$280,000	\$525,500	Annual
Senior Vice President	\$220,000	\$435,000	Annual
Chief Economic Development Officer	\$155,000	\$315,000	Annual
General Counsel	\$155,000	\$315,000	Annual
Finance Director	\$155,000	\$285,000	Annual
Deputy Chief Economic Development Officer	\$135,000	\$273,000	Annual
Deputy General Counsel	\$130,000	\$257,500	Annual
Senior Policy Advocate	\$155,000	\$278,000	Annual
Policy Advocate	\$105,000	\$221,500	Annual
Regulatory / Policy Analyst	\$105,000	\$205,000	Annual
Policy and Local Assistance Manager	\$105,000	\$205,000	Annual
Director of Data Management	\$113,500	\$242,500	Annual
IT Director	\$140,000	\$217,000	Annual
Director of Operations	\$140,000	\$242,500	Annual
Economic Development Officer	\$ 75,000	\$180,000	Annual
Communications Director	\$125,000	\$185,000	Annual
Director of Marketing and Stakeholder Relations	\$ 77,500	\$155,000	Annual
Government Affairs Operations Manager	\$ 93,000	\$155,000	Annual
Director of Board Operations	\$ 82,500	\$170,000	Annual
Accounting Manager	\$ 77,500	\$155,000	Annual
Management Analyst	\$ 72,500	\$120,000	Annual
Senior Program Administrator/Trainer	\$ 72,500	\$125,000	Annual
Program Administrator	\$ 62,000	\$113,500	Annual
Client Relations Representative	\$ 21.00	\$ 50.00	Hourly
Accounting Clerk	\$ 27.00	\$ 50.00	Hourly
Office Coordinator	\$ 21.00	\$ 36.00	Hourly

Rural County Representatives of California
Pay Schedule – Effective January 1, 2024

<u>Position/Title</u>	<u>Payrate Minimum</u>	<u>Payrate Maximum</u>	<u>Time Base</u>
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Chief Economic Development Officer	\$155,000	\$315,000	Annual
General Counsel	\$155,000	\$315,000	Annual
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Director of Data Management	\$113,500	\$242,500	Annual
IT Director	\$140,000	\$217,000	Annual
Director of Operations	\$140,000	\$242,500	Annual
Economic Development Officer	\$ 75,000	\$180,000	Annual
Communications Director	\$125,000	\$185,000	Annual
Director of Marketing and Stakeholder Relations	\$ 77,500	\$155,000	Annual
Government Affairs Operations Manager	\$ 93,000	\$155,000	Annual
Director of Board Operations	\$ 82,500	\$170,000	Annual
Accounting Manager	\$ 77,500	\$155,000	Annual
Management Analyst	\$ 72,500	\$120,000	Annual
Senior Program Administrator/Trainer	\$ 72,500	\$125,000	Annual
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Client Relations Representative	\$ 21.00	\$ 50.00	Hourly
Accounting Clerk	\$ 27.00	\$ 50.00	Hourly
Office Coordinator	\$ 21.00	\$ 36.00	Hourly

Rural County Representatives of California
Pay Schedule – Effective January 1, 2023

<u>Position/Title</u>	<u>Payrate Minimum</u>	<u>Payrate Maximum</u>	<u>Time Base</u>
President/CEO	\$275,000	\$525,500	Annual
Senior Vice President	\$215,000	\$412,000	Annual
Chief Economic Development Officer	\$150,000	\$300,000	Annual
General Counsel	\$150,000	\$300,000	Annual
Finance Director	\$150,000	\$275,000	Annual
Deputy Chief Economic Development Officer	\$130,000	\$265,000	Annual
Deputy General Counsel	\$125,000	\$250,000	Annual
Senior Policy Advocate	\$150,000	\$270,000	Annual
Policy Advocate	\$100,000	\$215,000	Annual
Regulatory / Policy Analyst ¹	\$100,000	\$200,000	Annual
Director of Data Management	\$100,000	\$225,000	Annual
IT Director	\$125,000	\$200,000	Annual
Director of Operations	\$125,000	\$225,000	Annual
Economic Development Officer	\$ 70,000	\$175,000	Annual
Communications Director	\$120,000	\$180,000	Annual
Director of Marketing and Stakeholder Relations	\$ 75,000	\$150,000	Annual
Government Affairs Operations Manager	\$ 90,000	\$150,000	Annual
Director of Board Operations	\$ 80,000	\$150,000	Annual
Management Analyst	\$ 70,000	\$115,000	Annual
Financial Analyst	\$ 60,000	\$135,000	Annual
Program Administrator/Trainer	\$ 60,000	\$110,000	Annual
Client Relations Representative	\$ 20.00	\$ 45.00	Hourly
Accounting Clerk	\$ 26.25	\$ 45.00	Hourly
Office Coordinator	\$ 20.00	\$ 35.00	Hourly

¹ Converting an existing policy advocate position into a regulatory / policy analyst position

Rural County Representatives of California
Pay Schedule – Effective January 1, 2023

<u>Position/Title</u>	<u>Payrate Minimum</u>	<u>Payrate Maximum</u>	<u>Time Base</u>
President/CEO	\$275,000	\$525,500	Annual
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General Counsel	\$150,000	\$300,000	Annual
Finance Director	\$150,000	\$275,000	Annual
Deputy Chief Economic Development Officer	\$130,000	\$265,000	Annual
Deputy General Counsel	\$125,000	\$250,000	Annual
Senior Policy Advocate	\$150,000	\$270,000	Annual
Policy Advocate	\$100,000	\$215,000	Annual
Regulatory / Policy Analyst ¹	\$100,000	\$200,000	Annual
Director of Data Management	\$100,000	\$225,000	Annual
IT Director	\$125,000	\$200,000	Annual
Director of Operations	\$125,000	\$225,000	Annual
Economic Development Officer	\$ 70,000	\$175,000	Annual
Communications Director	\$120,000	\$180,000	Annual
Director of Marketing and Stakeholder Relations	\$ 75,000	\$150,000	Annual
Government Affairs Operations Manager	\$ 90,000	\$150,000	Annual
Director of Board Operations	\$ 80,000	\$150,000	Annual
Management Analyst	\$ 70,000	\$115,000	Annual
Financial Analyst	\$ 60,000	\$135,000	Annual
Program Administrator/Trainer	\$ 60,000	\$110,000	Annual
Client Relations Representative	\$ 20.00	\$ 45.00	Hourly
Accounting Clerk	\$ 26.25	\$ 45.00	Hourly
Office Coordinator	\$ 20.00	\$ 35.00	Hourly

¹ Converting an existing policy advocate position into a regulatory / policy analyst position

**Rural County Representatives of California
Pay Schedule – Revised – Effective June 27, 2022**

<u>Position/Title</u>	<u>Payrate Minimum</u>	<u>Payrate Maximum</u>	<u>Time Base</u>
President/CEO	\$275,000	\$525,500	Annual
Senior Vice President	\$215,000	\$412,000	Annual
Chief Economic Development Officer	\$150,000	\$300,000	Annual
General Counsel	\$135,000	\$275,000	Annual
Finance Director ¹	\$124,000	\$258,000	Annual
Deputy Chief Economic Development Officer	\$130,000	\$265,000	Annual
Deputy General Counsel	\$100,000	\$210,000	Annual
Senior Policy Advocate	\$135,000	\$270,000	Annual
Policy Advocate	\$ 90,000	\$215,000	Annual
Director of Data Management	\$100,000	\$210,000	Annual
IT Director	\$ 90,000	\$190,000	Annual
Director of Operations	\$ 85,000	\$200,000	Annual
Economic Development Officer	\$ 70,000	\$175,000	Annual
Communications Director	\$120,000	\$180,000	Annual
Director of Marketing and Stakeholder Relations ²	\$ 75,000	\$150,000	Annual
Government Affairs Operations Manager	\$ 75,000	\$135,000	Annual
Director of Board Operations	\$ 80,000	\$145,500	Annual
Management Analyst ¹	\$ 70,000	\$115,000	Annual
Director of Accounting ¹	\$109,000	\$185,000	Annual
Financial Analyst	\$ 60,000	\$115,000	Annual
Program Administrator/Trainer	\$ 60,000	\$110,000	Annual
Client Relations Representative	\$ 19.00	\$ 45.00	Hourly
Accounting Clerk	\$ 26.25	\$ 42.00	Hourly
Office Coordinator	\$ 19.50	\$ 32.50	Hourly

¹ New position added in June 2022

² Position / title changed due to internal promotion.

**Rural County Representatives of California
Pay Schedule — Revised – Effective June 27, 2022**

<u>Position/Title</u>	<u>Payrate Minimum</u>	<u>Payrate Maximum</u>	<u>Time Base</u>
President/CEO	\$275,000	\$525,500	Annual
Senior Vice President	\$215,000	\$412,000	Annual
Chief Economic Development Officer	\$150,000	\$300,000	Annual
General Counsel	\$135,000	\$275,000	Annual
Finance Director ¹	\$124,000	\$258,000	Annual
Deputy Chief Economic Development Officer	\$130,000	\$265,000	Annual
Deputy General Counsel	\$100,000	\$210,000	Annual
Senior Policy Advocate	\$135,000	\$270,000	Annual
Policy Advocate	\$ 90,000	\$215,000	Annual
Director of Data Management	\$100,000	\$210,000	Annual
IT Director	\$ 90,000	\$190,000	Annual
Director of Operations	\$ 85,000	\$200,000	Annual
Economic Development Officer	\$ 70,000	\$175,000	Annual
Communications Director	\$120,000	\$180,000	Annual
Director of Marketing and Stakeholder Relations ²	\$ 75,000	\$150,000	Annual
Government Affairs Operations Manager	\$ 75,000	\$135,000	Annual
Director of Board Operations	\$ 80,000	\$145,500	Annual
Management Analyst ¹	\$ 70,000	\$115,000	Annual
Director of Accounting ¹	\$109,000	\$185,000	Annual
Financial Analyst	\$ 60,000	\$115,000	Annual
Program Administrator/Trainer	\$ 60,000	\$110,000	Annual
Client Relations Representative	\$ 19.00	\$ 45.00	Hourly
Accounting Clerk	\$ 26.25	\$ 42.00	Hourly
Office Coordinator	\$ 19.50	\$ 32.50	Hourly

¹ New position added in June 2022

² Position / title changed due to internal promotion.

Rural County Representatives of California
Pay Schedule – Effective January 1, 2022

<u>Position/Title</u>	<u>Payrate Minimum</u>	<u>Payrate Maximum</u>	<u>Time Base</u>
President/CEO	\$275,000	\$525,500	Annual
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Chief Operating Officer/Chief Financial Officer	\$190,000	\$410,000	Annual
Chief Economic Development Officer	\$150,000	\$300,000	Annual
General Counsel	\$135,000	\$275,000	Annual
Deputy Chief Economic Development Officer	\$130,000	\$265,000	Annual
Deputy Legal Counsel ¹	\$100,000	\$210,000	Annual
Senior Policy Advocate	\$135,000	\$270,000	Annual
Policy Advocate	\$ 90,000	\$215,000	Annual
Controller	\$100,000	\$200,000	Annual
Director of Data Management	\$100,000	\$210,000	Annual
IT Director	\$ 90,000	\$190,000	Annual
Director of Operations	\$ 85,000	\$200,000	Annual
Economic Development Officer	\$ 70,000	\$175,000	Annual
Communications Director	\$120,000	\$180,000	Annual
Marketing Director	\$ 75,000	\$150,000	Annual
Government Affairs Operations Manager	\$ 75,000	\$135,000	Annual
Director of Board Operations	\$ 80,000	\$145,500	Annual
Assistant Controller	\$ 80,000	\$145,500	Annual
Financial Analyst	\$ 60,000	\$115,000	Annual
Program Administrator/Trainer	\$ 60,000	\$110,000	Annual
Client Relations Representative	\$ 18.00	\$ 42.00	Hourly
Accounting Clerk	\$ 26.25	\$ 42.00	Hourly
Office Coordinator	\$ 19.50	\$ 32.50	Hourly
Office Assistant/Receptionist	\$ 17.50	\$ 30.00	Hourly

¹ New position added in 2022

(Attachment 3)Attachment G.1

**Rural County Representatives of California
Pay Schedule — Effective January 1, 2022**

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Rural County Representatives of California
Revised Pay Schedule - Effective June 27, 2021

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Senior Vice President	\$205,000	\$412,000	Annual
Vice President	\$150,000	\$355,000	Annual
Chief Operating Officer/Chief Financial Officer	\$155,000	\$410,000	Annual
Chief Economic Development Officer	\$140,000	\$283,000	Annual
General Counsel	\$125,000	\$257,500	Annual
Senior Legislative/Regulatory Advocate	\$125,000	\$257,500	Annual
Senior Economic Development Officer	\$125,000	\$257,500	Annual
Legislative Advocate	\$ 93,000	\$206,000	Annual
Controller	\$ 93,000	\$185,500	Annual
Director of Data Management	\$ 88,000	\$190,000	Annual
IT Director	\$ 77,500	\$180,000	Annual
Director of Operations	\$ 72,000	190,000	Annual
Economic Development Officer	\$ 62,000	\$165,000	Annual
Communications Director	\$120,000	\$175,000	Annual
Marketing Director	\$ 72,000	\$133,500	Annual
External Affairs Coordinator	\$ 62,000	\$113,500	Annual
Senior Governmental Affairs Coordinator / Clerk of the Board	\$ 62,000	\$113,500	Annual
Regulatory Affairs Advocate	\$ 90,000	\$185,000	Annual
Assistant Controller	\$ 51,500	\$113,500	Annual
Financial Analyst	\$ 51,500	\$103,000	Annual
Program Administrator/Trainer	\$ 51,500	\$103,000	Annual
Client Relations Representative	\$ 16.50	\$ 40.00	Hourly
Accountant	\$ 25.00	\$ 40.00	Hourly
Executive Assistant ¹	\$ 28.00	\$ 50.00	Hourly
Office Coordinator	\$ 18.50	\$ 31.00	Hourly
Office Assistant/Receptionist	\$ 16.50	\$ 28.25	Hourly

¹ New position added in 2021

Attachment H.1

Rural County Representatives of California
Revised Pay Schedule - Effective June 27, 2021

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Rural County Representatives of California
Pay Schedule – Effective January 1, 2021

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Communications Director	\$120,000	\$175,000	Annual
Marketing Director	\$ 72,000	\$133,500	Annual
External Affairs Coordinator	\$ 62,000	\$113,500	Annual
Senior Governmental Affairs Coordinator / Clerk of the Board	\$ 62,000	\$113,500	Annual
Regulatory Affairs Specialist	\$ 56,750	\$92,750	Annual
Assistant Controller	\$ 51,500	\$113,500	Annual
Financial Analyst	\$ 51,500	\$103,000	Annual
Program Administrator/Trainer	\$ 51,500	\$103,000	Annual
Client Relations Representative	\$ 16.50	\$ 40.00	Hourly
Executive Assistant ¹	\$ 28.00	\$ 50.00	Hourly
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¹ New position added in 2021

Attachment I.1

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Pay Schedule – Effective January 1,
2021

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¹ New position added in 2021



To: Members of the RCRC Board of Directors

From: Supervisor Chris Lopez, Monterey County, COLR Ad Hoc Committee Chair
(Staff: Tracy Rhine, Senior Policy Advocate and Leigh Kammerich, Senior Policy Advocate)

Date: January 13, 2026

Re: Carrier of Last Resort Ad Hoc Committee: Final Report and Next Steps - **ACTION**

Summary

This memo summarizes the work of the RCRC ad hoc advisory committee to review Carrier of Last Resort (COLR) rules, and provides policy recommendations for the RCRC Board of Directors to adopt for ongoing advocacy and next steps.

Background

At the direction of the RCRC Board of Directors, the COLR Ad Hoc Committee was formed in December 2024 for the purposes to share feedback to inform legislative and regulatory efforts on Carrier of Last Resort rules to ensure reliable, equitable access to telecommunications services in rural counties, review telecommunications policy principles for potential updates, and be a venue to discuss advocacy efforts and strategies with State and/or Federal agencies and Legislative representatives. Over the 2025 calendar year, the Ad Hoc met with key stakeholders, including with AT&T representatives, Assemblywoman Tina McKinnor, and subject matter experts from The Utility Reform Network (TURN) as well as a north state Sheriff. The Ad Hoc also toured an AT&T Central Office facility to learn more about network infrastructure.

Carrier of Last Resort (COLR) obligations stem from the principle of universal service, a policy goal aimed at maintaining nationwide connectivity as an essential public utility, and plays a crucial role in sustaining nondiscriminatory access to communications networks and infrastructure needs across all communities. A designated telecommunications COLR is required to build out, maintain, and operate necessary infrastructure to provide reliable telephone, and increasingly, broadband-based services to any customer upon request in its service territory. This responsibility is linked to the receipt of public funding and ratepayer subsidies to offset the financial burden of maintaining basic, essential services in high-cost (i.e. less profitable) regions.

Given greater technological advancements and evolving consumer preferences for both voice service and broadband, the state is contemplating how to update its laws and

regulatory framework, including a potential technology transition from plain old telephone service (POTS) to broadband-based voice services, which do not enjoy commensurate service quality standards or consumer protections.

The following Supervisors were appointed to serve on the COLR Ad Hoc Committee:

Supervisor Chris Lopez, Monterey County – Serving as Chair
Supervisor Lee Adams, Sierra County – Serving as Vice Chair
Supervisor David Griffith, Alpine County
Supervisor Anne Cottrell, Napa County
Supervisor Sue Hoek, Nevada County
Supervisor Bob Nelson, Santa Barbara County
Supervisor Gary Bradford, Yuba County

Issues

The Ad Hoc Committee met five times before composing its final report. The topics covered in those meetings include:

- February 5, 2025: Overview of COLR and Background; Discussion with Industry Representatives

The Committee discussed their overarching interest in reforming current COLR rules to facilitate updated voice service offerings with more modernized networks that continue to reliably serve all communities. The Ad Hoc Committee also met with representatives of AT&T California to discuss AT&T's legislative intent and community engagement plans for COLR relief. AT&T representatives confirmed that not every customer currently served with POTS would be replaced with fiber, as some areas are too sparsely populated for such a build-out. AT&T explained they desire a phased approach to be relieved, focusing first on areas with no population and no customers with a challenge process to their proposed maps.

- March 19, 2025: Overview of Assembly Bill 470; Discussion with Consumer Advocates

The Committee reviewed Assembly Bill 470, introduced by Assemblymember Tina McKinnor, which proposed to allow a COLR provider to automatically shed its obligation to provide reliable, affordable access to basic telephone service by simply notifying the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) that—in its own determination—there are no customers or population in a given area and that alternative voice services exist. Members discussed the potential impacts of the legislation on consumer protections, service quality, and emergency communications—particularly in member counties that are vulnerable to power outages and limited connectivity. Representatives from The Utility Reform Network (TURN) shared their perspective on ensuring continuity of service and maintaining accountability for telecommunications providers. The Committee agreed to take a formal oppose position on AB 470, emphasizing the importance of preserving universal service obligations and robust oversight by the CPUC.

- May 21, 2025: Policy Hearing Updates; Discussion with Assemblymember Tina McKinnor; Discussion with the North State Sheriffs Association

The Committee met with Assemblymember Tina McKinnor to discuss her legislation, AB 470, and its implications for rural service reliability and consumer protections. Members expressed significant concerns about the proposal's potential to relieve AT&T of COLR responsibilities in "well-served" areas without sufficient verification or alternatives in place. Assemblymember McKinnor outlined proposed amendments to AB 470 and emphasized her intent to maintain safeguards for unserved and underserved areas. The Committee also heard from Lassen County Sheriff John McGarva of the North State Sheriffs' Association, who stressed the continuing public safety importance of copper landlines in areas lacking dependable broadband or wireless coverage. Finally, the Ad Hoc reaffirmed its opposition to any policy changes that would reduce reliability or erode public safety communications in rural communities.

- June 6, 2025: AB 470 Negotiations Update

The Committee reconvened to evaluate negotiations with the Speaker's office and the author and resulting amendments to AB 470. Members reviewed revision's proposed by legislative leadership that strengthened build-out requirements and clarified definitions of "well-served" areas. While many of RCRC's concerns had been addressed—including service continuity, fiber replacement expectations, and mapping accuracy—the Committee remained cautious about long-term implementation and enforcement. After deliberation, members agreed to shift RCRC's position on AB 470 from "oppose" to "neutral" as amended, while maintaining the option to reassert opposition should key provisions change in the Senate.

- October 22, 2025: Review of Cal Advocates Policy Framework; Final Policy Recommendations

Following the conclusion of the 2025 legislative session, the Committee reviewed the California Public Advocates Office's (Cal Advocates) proposed framework submitted in the CPUC COLR Proceeding to modernize COLR obligations, which emphasize universal access, technology-neutral standards, and a phased transition from legacy copper service to broadband-based service. Members discussed how these principles align with RCRC's telecommunications policy priorities—particularly maintaining reliability, affordability, and consumer protections during a technology or provider transition. The Ad Hoc discussed policy recommendations to guide RCRC's future legislative and regulatory advocacy efforts, reinforcing the position that modernization should not leave anyone behind and that rural residents continue to receive reliable and affordable communications services.

Committee Policy Recommendations

The COLR Ad Hoc Committee recommends that any consideration of legislative or regulatory changes to COLR obligations be guided by the following principles. These principles are constructed in a manner to provide RCRC staff the flexibility and continued opportunity to evaluate, engage in, and influence future discussions or negotiations on modernizing telecommunications frameworks that currently ensure every Californian has access to basic telephone service. While the expansion of high-quality, next generation networks and high-speed broadband deployment should be encouraged, it should be

done in an equitable manner, including in high-cost, hard to serve rural and frontier markets; and modernization and technological advancements should not come at the expense of ubiquity and public safety.

1. Availability

Principle: All Californians must retain access to at least one reliable voice and/or voice-capable broadband service that meets enforceable quality standards.

Implementation considerations:

- Modernized or replacement technologies should offer, at a minimum, *functional equivalence* to legacy services, including the ability to reach emergency services and maintain essential communications.
- Successor networks or providers should ensure universal coverage, avoiding any new “digital deserts” or coverage gaps.

2. Reliability

Principle: Modernized COLR services must meet defined, measurable reliability standards to ensure continuity during normal operations and emergencies.

Implementation considerations:

- Ensure appropriate minimum, enforceable performance standards are in place for any service designated to satisfy the COLR obligation, such as uptime, call completion, and resiliency measures (e.g. back-up power or redundancy).

3. Accountability

Principle: Market modernization should not diminish oversight or consumer protection.

Implementation considerations:

- Providers should remain subject to performance monitoring, reporting, and public transparency measures regarding service quality and outage data.
- Maintain state regulatory authority over consumer complaints, billing practices, and service restoration regardless of technology platform.

4. Affordability

Principle: Modernized COLR services must remain affordable and equitable across all communities.

Implementation considerations:

- Ensure continued eligibility for and participation in state and federal subsidy programs, such as Lifeline.

Staff Recommendation

It is recommended that the RCRC Board of Directors consider and take action on the committee policy recommendations. For next steps, the COLR Ad Hoc Committee will continue dormant through December 31, 2026 (with the exception of Supervisor Bob Nelson, Santa Barbara County, who will step off to avoid overlap with a quorum of the Executive Committee), and RCRC staff will consult with the Committee members in the

event of unforeseen developments not addressed by the foregoing policy recommendations or RCRC Policy Principles.

Attachment

- CalMatters Article, [They rely on landlines for emergencies. AT&T's political moves in California could take those away](#) (November 13, 2025)

ECONOMY

They rely on landlines for emergencies. AT&T's political moves in California could take those away



BY YUE STELLA YU AND MALENA CAROLLO

NOVEMBER 13, 2025

[Republish](#)

Hacienda resident Cynthia Halliday checks for a dial tone on her landline phone at her home above the Russian River in Sonoma County, Oct. 23, 2025. Halliday lost her husband to a heart attack and could not stay connected to 911 on her cell phone. She ended up yelling to her neighbor to call on his landline for help. AT&T is seeking to shed a requirement to provide landlines in areas like Hacienda. Photo by Chad Surmick for CalMatters

IN SUMMARY

AT&T's failed effort this year to retire copper landlines in parts of California seemed to have support from a diverse grassroots coalition. But many of the members had ties with the telecom giant, CalMatters found.

Upon hearing her husband's call for help, Cynthia Halliday came flying upstairs. He was rushing toward the outdoor deck, gasping for air. He was having a heart attack.

Halliday held him and dialed 911 with her cellphone. The dispatcher answered, but within seconds, she said, the call disconnected due to poor reception. Halliday screamed for help, loud enough for her next-door neighbor Larry Williams to hear and dial from his copper landline. This time, it got through.

Halliday's husband did not survive. But on that day in 2018, Halliday became convinced that copper landlines were her best shot at getting help during emergencies, especially where she lives in Hacienda, a tight-knit community deep in the rural forests of Northern California.

Those landlines, however, are what AT&T — the largest copper landline provider in California — is pushing to retire nationwide.

As California's largest "carrier of last resort," AT&T is required by law to provide basic phone service, typically copper landlines, to any Californian who asks for it, with lower-income customers qualifying for a discount. It provides 75% of the state's last-resort phone service, accounting for about 500,000 Californians and 5% of all its California customers.

Subsidies to support copper landlines have declined sharply. Critics say AT&T wants to shed them to avoid their billion-dollar annual cost and boost profits with lucrative services like fiber.

For the past two years, AT&T has tried unsuccessfully to bow out of that obligation in many areas of the state, spending heavily to influence state regulations and laws. This year, it spent at least \$4.5 million on lobbying as it tried and failed to [pass a bill](#) that would have allowed AT&T to cut copper services in certain areas in exchange for agreeing to expand its fiber services. Its industry ally, USTelecom, [assembled a "grassroots" coalition](#) to support the legislation, with more than 80% of coalition members having ties to AT&T, CalMatters found.

The company's efforts to shed copper landlines show no signs of stopping. An ongoing process by the utilities regulators seeks to determine key components of the carrier of last resort requirements. And Assemblymember

[**Tina McKinnor**](#), an Inglewood Democrat, told CalMatters she intends to revive the bill that died this year.

It's unclear just how many Californians would be impacted if AT&T gets its way. [A map AT&T submitted](#) to California utilities regulators as part of a failed 2023 effort marked 1,133 towns across 53 of California's counties, including rural communities such as Hacienda, as territories the company sought to withdraw from.

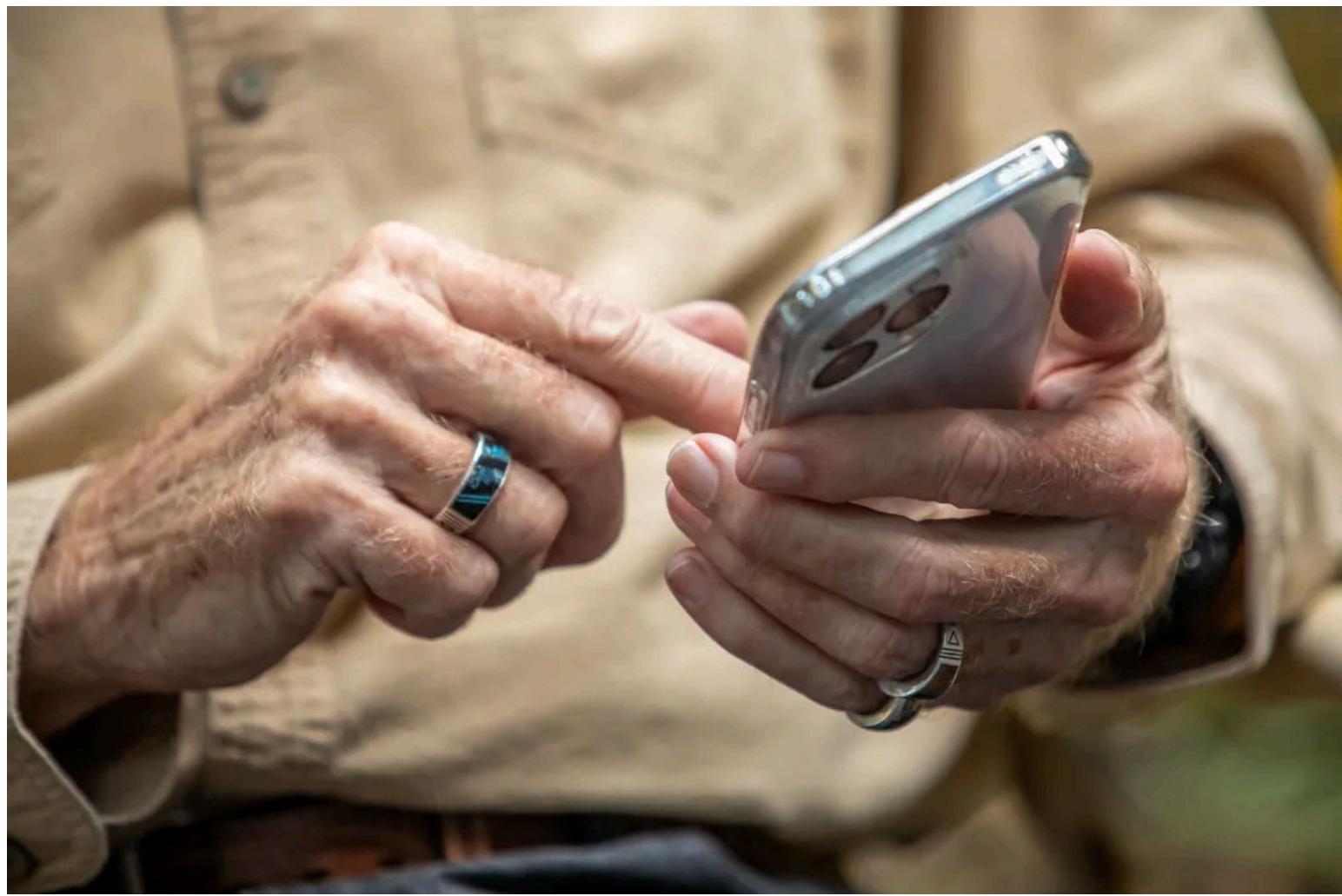
AT&T said it only wants to pull out of communities with multiple alternatives, such as wireless and fixed broadband. It argued it's not cost-effective to maintain expensive copper lines for many of its customers, the number of which has dwindled over the years. Doing away with the obligation would free up money to invest in more advanced technologies, such as fiber optics, it said.

"No Californian will be left without reliable phone service in their homes, including 911 services," said Terri Baca, vice president of legislative affairs at AT&T, [at an April legislative hearing](#).

But critics say the reliability of those alternatives isn't guaranteed, and that AT&T's push would pad shareholders' pockets at the expense of a lifeline for those communities, especially during power outages and natural disasters. Statewide, more than one million 911 calls are made each year over landlines, [according to the state's Office of Emergency Services](#).

If AT&T's goal is to upgrade services, it should build them out before retiring copper, opponents argue.

"If they wanted to replace copper with fiber right now, there's nothing stopping them," said Phil Grosse, a Hacienda resident and the North Coast regional chair of the California Democratic Party's rural caucus.



Phil Grosse looks for a cell signal in the Hacienda area of Sonoma County on Oct. 23, 2025. Photo by Chad Surmick for CalMatters

The debate has intensified in California in recent years, partly because it is a significant holdout in AT&T's [plan to abandon copper networks](#) across the country.

Spokespeople for USTelecom, its coalition Californians for a Connected Future, and AT&T did not specify how they recruited coalition members or why most members had ties to AT&T. Instead, they sent general statements calling the state's carrier of last resort obligation archaic.

"Our goal is to deliver the best possible experience to our customers, now and into the future," said Megan Ketterer of AT&T.

Cara Duckworth, a spokesperson for USTelecom, told CalMatters "even if we answered all the questions I'm not sure we'd get a fair shake."

“Many of our providers would love to no longer have to spend money maintaining old copper equipment and would much rather invest that money in next (generation) networks that better serve consumers,” she said.

Some rural Californians say they fear AT&T will eventually wear state lawmakers down to that goal.

“Rural communities don’t have the big money to compete with AT&T. That’s why we hire legislators to look out for us,” Grosse said in a June letter to state lawmakers.

‘Predictably unpredictable’

Kathy Yerger, 67, lives among redwoods so dense that wireless Internet providers have refused to service her Hacienda home.

“It would be like trying to find a golf ball in the sky,” she remembered one provider telling her. Another, upon learning her address, chuckled and told her “no, you are not on the list,” she said.

Although she has a cellphone, Yerger has learned not to rely on it.

“If I put the phone in the window and hope the stars line up and the trees don’t blow, yes I can (try to connect),” she said. “It’s predictably unpredictable.”

Like many of her neighbors, Yerger’s best — if not only — bet at communicating with the outside world is her copper landline. Even that line fails sometimes when water corrodes the old copper wires. But it’s still the most reliable option she has, especially during emergencies and natural disasters.



Hacienda resident Phil Grosse makes his way down single lane McPeak Road, past a fire warning sign that highlights the precarious nature of the living environment along the Russian River, in Sonoma County on Oct. 23, 2025. Photo by Chad Surmick for CalMatters



First: Phil Grosse studies emergency evacuation routes while meeting with Hacienda neighbors. **Last:** Historic flood levels are marked on a support beam on a bridge underneath Hacienda's Westside Road in Sonoma County on Oct. 23, 2025. Photos by Chad Surmick for CalMatters

In Hacienda, frequent mudslides and floods during rainy winters have [washed away homes](#), sparked power outages, and [sometimes claimed lives](#). The 2020 Walbridge fire, which scorched more than 55,000 acres of Sonoma County, got within a quarter mile of Yerger's house. The only notification was word of mouth from the local fire department deputies and a neighbor calling her landline, she said.

Few reliable alternatives remain during those disasters. Cellphone services, which many Californians rely on to receive emergency alerts, can [quickly fail](#). Fiber optic lines, while more resilient, [require backup power](#) along the network and [are expensive to install](#). Voice-over-Internet-Protocol phones, a landline alternative, depend on the internet and home electricity and thus fail during power outages.

The alternatives are so unreliable during emergencies that Hacienda residents created walking evacuation routes along the area's ragged switchbacks. They set up their own walkie-talkie network, drilling weekly. They even discussed using bullhorns and sirens to alert each other if a wildfire comes through, Grosse said. The hope is to reach enough people for someone with a copper landline to call for help.

“There’s no copper fetish here,” Grosse said. “When a reliable alternative appears, I’d really be happy to give (it) up.”

A technology upgrade or a profit grab?

Underlying AT&T’s push to retire copper is money. Telecom companies previously received subsidies from state and federal governments for last-resort services, but those payments have been reduced or eliminated in recent decades. California, for example, reduced its subsidy fund from \$400 million in 1996 to about \$20 million currently, according to a USTelecom regulatory filing.

This leaves companies providing landlines with a larger share of the bill for maintaining such networks. For AT&T, [that’s about \\$1 billion each year in California alone](#).

Despite this, AT&T remains profitable. An October filing with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission showed a \$9.7 billion profit so far this year. And fiber is one of its profit drivers, bringing in \$2.2 billion, up nearly 17% from the same time last year.

“They’re looking for a way to boost profits,” said Ernesto Falcon, communications and broadband program manager for the California Public Advocates Office. “They can’t legally do that unless you get rid of (the carrier of last resort requirements).”

AT&T representatives have repeatedly insisted that the company’s efforts to pull out as a carrier of last resort are to modernize telecommunication. In public hearings, they promised that AT&T’s request would not threaten copper landlines in areas without other viable options.

So far, state regulators and lawmakers aren’t convinced.



Two landline phones at a home in Topanga on Feb. 16, 2024. Photo by Yannick Peterhans, USA Today Network via AP Photo

The California Public Utilities Commission rejected a [March 2023 petition](#) by AT&T that would have allowed it to pull out copper lines only in service areas where customers have telephone service alternatives. The application claimed 99.7% of its customers had access to at least three alternatives, with 99.9% having access to at least two.

After the rejection, the company turned to the state Legislature, sponsoring bills to relinquish its obligation.

Last year, [an AT&T-backed bill](#) would have granted the company relief if it notified the commission of certain census blocks with no customers or with multiple phone service alternatives. The bill, authored by McKinnor, died without a hearing.

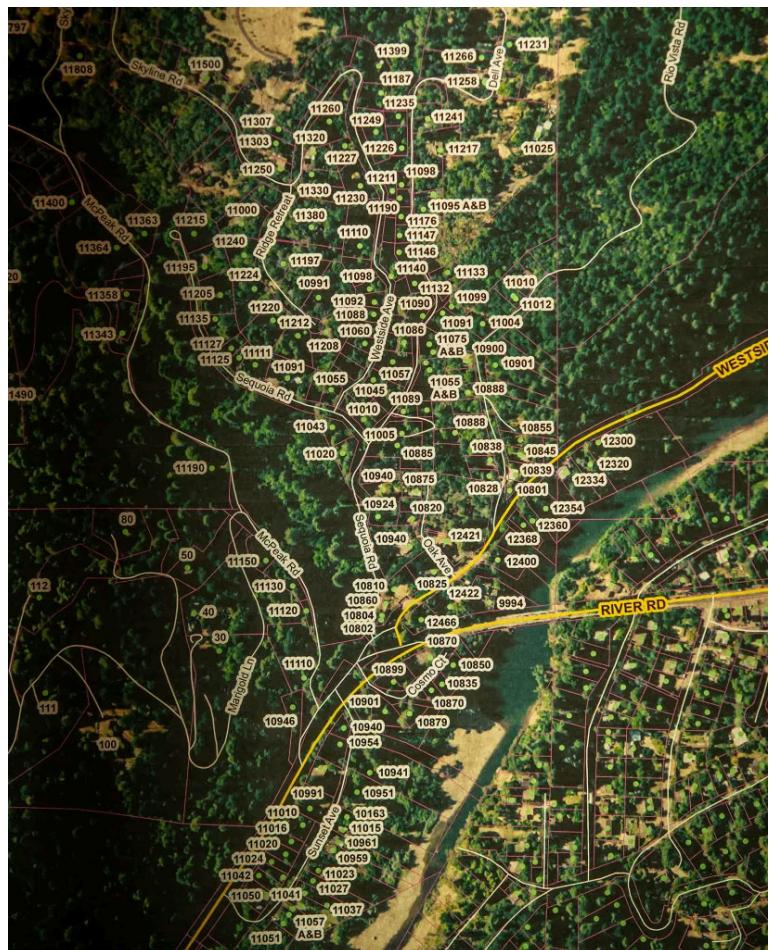
McKinnor reintroduced the measure as Assembly Bill 470 this spring. In its final form, the bill would have allowed AT&T to pull copper lines out of open spaces and “well served” areas — those with at least three other service providers — if it promised, among other requirements, to expand advanced fiber optics in six

years to three times as many households as it is currently required to serve and to help its customers transition to other services.

The bill would have required the public utilities commission to map out well-served areas using the Federal Communications Commission's National Broadband Map and the federal Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Program — both tools to measure internet, not telephone, connectivity. The map was criticized by opponents of the bill, including the California Public Advocate's Office, as not being an accurate representation of coverage.

“This bill does not leave any customer behind. This isn’t about taking something away, it’s about ensuring that we have a plan to migrate Californians to superior services,” [Baca said in a July hearing](#).

McKinnor told CalMatters the measure was her “out of the box, progressive” way to get AT&T to pay for infrastructure upgrades instead of spending taxpayer dollars.



First: A sign for McPeak Road is tacked onto a utility pole. **Last:** A Cal Fire emergency coordination map, which shows structures located in the Hacienda area, hangs in the window of Frank Patane's barn in Sonoma County on Oct. 23, 2025. Photos by Chad Surmick for CalMatters

But critics say some areas, such as Hacienda, could count as well served while still lacking quality access. There's no guarantee that other providers would offer reliable alternatives, and the legislation would not have required the fiber buildout to be in the same communities where AT&T seeks to pull out, they said. Many Hacienda households are listed on the federal broadband map as having four internet providers available — none of which are reliable, they said.

"I agree we need to have technology, but only to a point where you are not dropping service for people that are dependent on it," said Kelli Mathia, immediate past president of the Odd Fellows Recreation Club in Guerneville, down the Russian River from Hacienda.

If AT&T is really trying to upgrade services, why must they pull out copper lines first? Halliday wondered.

But McKinnor said allowing AT&T to preemptively pull the lines is only fair.

"I believe in free enterprise," she told CalMatters. "I can't mandate a business to spend billions of dollars doing infrastructure and say, 'Oh, maybe we will give you (the relief) at the end.'"

AT&T's real goal is to boost its bottom line, said Regina Costa, a Hacienda resident and telecom policy director for The Utility Reform Network, which led opposition to the bill.

"What they really want is to get rid of customers that they do not think are profitable," she said.

In a shareholder meeting last year, AT&T CEO John Stankey said getting customers off of copper lines allowed the company to "turn down" that service in "low utilization" and "low profitable" territories. "I can turn out the lights, walk away, take cost out of business," he said.

AT&T's web of connections

AT&T is already a political juggernaut in Sacramento.

Between 2015 and 2024, AT&T made nearly \$3 million in campaign contributions to state lawmakers, according to an analysis of CalMatters' **Digital Democracy database**. This year, it contributed nearly \$300,000 to lawmakers' campaign accounts as they considered its sponsored legislation, data from the California secretary of state's office shows.

AT&T also **reported giving five California lawmakers and two of their staffers** \$300 tickets to Mexican singer Ana Gabriel's Sacramento concert on the day the bill died in the Senate Appropriations Committee. The

five, all Democrats, were Sen. [Susan Rubio](#) of West Covina and Assemblymembers [Mark Gonzalez](#), of Los Angeles; [José Solache](#), of Lakewood; [Juan Carrillo](#), of Palmdale; and [Blanca Rubio](#), of West Covina. All voted for AB 470 this year, with Assemblymember Rubio voting for early iterations of the bill but not casting a floor vote.

Spokespeople for all five lawmakers told CalMatters that AT&T's gifts did not sway their decision and that they supported the bill on merit.

The company spent another [\\$4 million](#) lobbying state lawmakers and Gov. Gavin Newsom's administration about the bill this year, including \$2 million spent between April and June, making it the company's [most expensive lobbying quarter in California](#) in 20 years. It spent an additional \$354,000 lobbying the utilities commission to [influence the state's carrier of last resort rules](#) and [policies around telephone companies' service quality standards](#).

AT&T is so powerful in Sacramento, Grosse said, that some legislative aides told him in the past he would not win in a fight against the company.

"The (party's) rural caucus can go ahead and they can talk to legislators, but AT&T is spending so much money on elections you are not going to prevail," he recalled being told.

On its face, AB 470 had widespread support this year from [Californians for a Connected Future](#), a recently formed coalition of more than 150 disability advocates, chambers of commerce, tribes, community service organizations, local officials and small businesses, including a construction company and a tennis shop. For months, dozens of those groups testified in public hearings and signed [identical letters](#) urging lawmakers to pass the bill, arguing it would incentivize modern technologies and ensure more reliable coverage.

The coalition, which describes itself as ["grassroots,"](#) also states it is a "[project of USTelecom](#)." Rhonda Johnson, AT&T's executive vice president of federal regulatory relations, [sits on the trade group's board](#). USTelecom received \$250,000 from AT&T to lobby on its behalf this year, and also spent [between \\$85,200 and \\$106,000 running ads on Facebook](#) supporting the bill in the coalition's name, according to a CalMatters tally.

It's a prevalent practice commonly known as "astroturfing," when corporations or trade groups enlist seemingly unaffiliated organizations for the appearance of grassroots support, said Jack Pitney, politics professor at Claremont McKenna College.

"If you don't read the fine print, you'll assume that ... there are a lot of organizations that sincerely support this legislation."



Lobbyists and other visitors gather in the rotunda of the state Capitol during the end of session in Sacramento on Sept. 12, 2025. Photo by Fred Greaves for CalMatters

While the coalition often [**bragged about the scale and diversity of its membership**](#), more than 80% of member organizations have ties to AT&T, CalMatters found.

Some of those groups have AT&T's top leaders serving on their board of directors. That includes AT&T president Susan Santana, [**who sits on the board of the California Chamber of Commerce**](#). Ben Golombek, the chamber's chief of staff for policy, [**most recently served**](#) as the west region vice president for public affairs for AT&T. Other AT&T executives, mostly directors of external affairs, double as board members of various local chambers, business groups, foundations and voting rights groups.

AT&T also pays to be a member of many local chambers of commerce, many of whom support the bill. Of the 28 chambers in support, AT&T is listed as a corporate member of 26 of them.

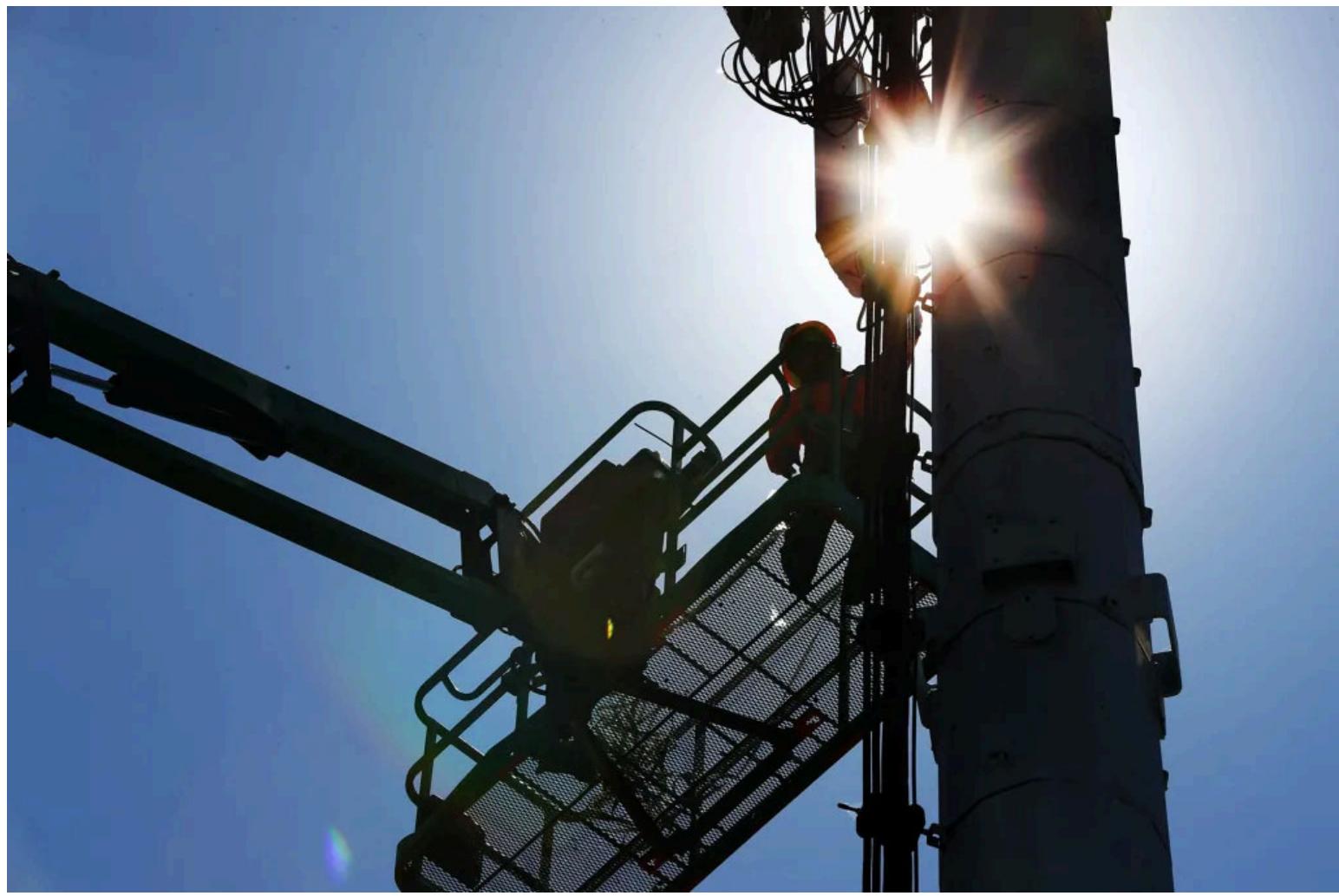
Dozens of coalition members list AT&T as a key funder. The California Asian Pacific Chamber of Commerce calls AT&T an “[**invaluable**](#)” partner. Groups such as the [**Concerned Black Men of Los Angeles**](#), which provides mentorship to Black local residents, list the company as a sponsor.

Others, including tribes, youth service groups and senior advocates, have partnered with the company in its \$5 billion effort to “bridge the digital divide” nationwide, [**distributing free laptops**](#) donated by AT&T, hosting “connected learning centers” the company set up across the state to offer free digital access or [**receiving grants**](#) from AT&T to address digital inequity.

The telecom giant has also sponsored events for some coalition members, from [**golf tournaments**](#) for the San Gabriel Valley Conservation Corps to the [**70th anniversary gala**](#) of Society for the Blind.

The financial support can make it hard not to align with AT&T, Pitney said.

“If AT&T has supported you in a material way, you want to make sure that support continues,” he said. “You are likely to look favorably on requests from that organization.”



A telecommunications utility worker updates telecommunication antennas on an AT&T post on in Oakland on Aug. 14, 2019. Photo by Ray Chavez, Bay Area News Group

CalMatters reached out to all organizations and people named in this story for comment. Most did not respond. California Chamber of Commerce spokesperson John Myers said it supported the bill because it made “economic sense.” Lauren Oto, a spokesperson for the California Asian Pacific Chamber of Commerce, said the group supported the AT&T-backed bill because “it represents a key opportunity for our members to see that technology is being used to improve public safety and expand access to communication.”

Norma Quiñones, executive director of the San Gabriel Valley nonprofit, told CalMatters AT&T’s sponsorship had nothing to do with the group’s support for the legislation. But the nonprofit offers job training to youths, she said, and AT&T is a prospective employer. While acknowledging not knowing much about the bill, she said it would help close the digital divide and expand high-speed internet access to underserved communities like the ones she serves.

“I wanted to build the relationship with AT&T and support their efforts,” she said. “It ultimately ties into our workforce development and our digital equity goals for our young people.”

The sway AT&T has worries residents like Grosse.

“One of the largest corporations in the world spent (millions of) dollars lobbying on this thing,” he said. “Do you really think it’s in the public’s interest?”

Regulatory change on the horizon?

If potential legislation doesn’t beat them to it, California utility regulators are expected to decide the future of California’s carrier of last resort obligations over the coming months.

The California Public Utilities Commission is currently undertaking a rulemaking process that seeks to answer questions including who should be providing last resort service, what would count as sufficient coverage and under what circumstances companies could stop doing so.

USTelecom and AT&T have advocated for changing the requirement so AT&T can stop providing this service in all but “populated areas,” and eventually leave those as well.

“Customers will gain, not lose,” AT&T [said in a September 2024 filing](#).



To: Members of the RCRC Board of Directors

From: Supervisor Geri Byrne, Modoc County, Williamson Act Ad Hoc Committee Chair
(Staff: John Kennedy, Senior Policy Advocate)

Date: January 15, 2026

Re: Williamson Act Ad Hoc Committee: Final Report Recommended Revisions and Next Steps - **ACTION**

Background

The RCRC Board of Directors established a Williamson Act Ad Hoc Committee in 2024, which delivered its report and recommendations in January 2025. During the 2025 legislative session, a controversial legislative proposal, Assembly Bill 1156, prompted re-evaluation of some of these recommendations, and in June 2025, the Board reauthorized the Williamson Act Ad Hoc Committee to guide RCRC's engagement on that measure. (The June 2025 Board memo is attached.)

The reauthorized Ad Hoc Committee met several times in July through September 2025. While Assembly Bill 1156 was ultimately not enacted, the Committee's consideration of that measure lead it to recommend several changes to its earlier policy recommendations. The proposed revisions to the previously-approved Committee recommendations are set forth below, in redline.

The following are recommendations to the full RCRC Board by the Ad Hoc Committee.

Issues – Policy Recommendations for Consideration

Policy Recommendation: RCRC should continue to strongly support the Williamson Act, including the resumption of the State subvention program, as well as agricultural land conservation more largely.

The Williamson Act remains one of the most effective programs for ensuring large-scale agricultural land conservation. Even after the cessation of the subvention program by the

State in 2009, all but one of the then-participating counties kept their local Williamson Act programs in force—despite the continued significant costs borne by those counties. Thanks to the Williamson Act, several RCRC member counties have large portions of their otherwise developable land under contract, and many counties still issue new contracts under the Act to this day. The Act remains the most widely-used tool for local governments to ensure their agricultural lands are conserved for current and future agricultural production, as well as for open space and resources conservation.

Despite the long-standing success of the Act (2025 being its six-decade anniversary), some have questioned whether it should continue to promote agricultural land conservation through its unique mechanism of below-market property tax assessments in an era of several competing demands for developable land, including for housing production and renewables development. While those economic forces have existed for years, the passage of new housing and climate laws over the past two decades, along with continued prioritization of housing and climate issues by state policymakers, has brought new pressure to policymakers to allow conversion of contract lands.

While these development pressures may eventually prompt changes to the Act, there are certain principles RCRC should still consider as bedrock, including:

- (1) The Williamson Act should remain, first and foremost, a program dedicated to agricultural land conservation. Allowances for below-market property tax assessments are rare in California law, and, therefore, the Williamson Act should not be amended to allow uses unrelated or loosely related to agland conservation to benefit from that tax mechanism—especially without consideration by the state to make up for lost county revenue. Similarly, the Act's definition of "agricultural use" should not be expanded to include new activities that are not integral to the production of agricultural commodities for commercial purposes.
- (2) The state continues to reap benefits—including climate, economic, and food security benefits—from county decisions to uphold contracts, even while counties continue to bear the vast majority of costs. The State should recommit to funding the program through subvention payments, and consider new mechanisms for funding city and county costs in addition to baseline subvention funding.
- (3) While Williamson Act cancellations are an important facet of the program, the Legislature should not consider new avenues for cancellation, especially if they restrict local governments from deciding the cancellation. And if policymakers are intent on creating new pathways for cancellation, those provisions should not leave counties less whole than if the contracting parties underwent the ordinary non-renewal or cancellation process currently in law.
- (4) Any new or expanded pathway for conversion of Williamson Act land to non-

agricultural use, regardless of its name, should require payment of cancellation fees or similar economic contribution to community benefits. The local jurisdiction should be a party to any community benefits agreement or similar mechanism required as part of the conversion process.

(3)(5) RCRC should specifically oppose creation of new pathways for conversion of Williamson Act land to additional types of non-agricultural uses, beyond those contemplated in existing law.

Policy Recommendation: The State should reinstate mechanisms to compensate counties for program costs, as well as institute new mechanisms to support counties as they increasingly bear the program's full administrative burden.

Every county that participates in the Williamson Act today does so at a significant cost to their local budget, and without state support—despite the increased administrative burden that counties bear to maintain and implement the program. Furthermore, county budgets are increasingly under pressure from existing and new state mandates requiring expanded access to mental health care, mandating compliance with new housing and planning rules, and increasing labor and project input costs.

Even with these growing pressures on local budgets, and despite the continued popularity of the Act by contract holders and land conservation advocates alike, the state continues to disinvest in the Act. RCRC believes that instead of leaving local jurisdictions to bear all costs and burdens, the State should:

(1) Resume subvention payments with the same or similar funding formulas that were in place prior to cessation of the subvention program in 2009. The total state cost from subvention payments amounted then to \$30-40 million dollars annually, for a program that put millions of acres into active non-developed status. By comparison, other state programs today are funded at similar or higher budget levels but only achieve a fraction of total acres conserved.

The Williamson Act remains the most cost-effective approach to promote agricultural land and open space conservation, and the State should therefore resume subvention payments not just to make counties whole, but to ensure efficient use of limited state funds to achieve maximum benefit to its open space conservation goals.

(2) Consider new mechanisms to fund the administration of the program, as more of the administrative burden of implementing the Act has fallen to counties. This includes the rerouting of cancellation fees to counties for their collection.

(2)(3) Cancellation fees exist in the Act to disincentivize land holders from removing lands from conserved status, as well as to partially compensate government for years of costs spent to maintain the program. However,

while counties bear the vast share of costs, cancellation fees are still directed to the State despite its increasingly minimal role in administering the Act. As the State continues to pare back its Williamson Act program activity at Department of Conservation, RCRC should clearly express to lawmakers that recission and cancellation fees and other economic contributions made by developers as part of any conversion process should instead be redirected back to local governments for their ongoing costs.

Policy Recommendation: Any changes to Williamson Act law should affirm and strengthen local authority to determine future implementation of the Act. And prior to creating new authorities, the State should consider whether existing authorities, including the solar use easement program, Farmland Security Zones, and nine-year contracting under AB 1265 (2011) are better suited to support current state goals than proposed new or expanded programs that may undermine the Act.

Under current law, the Williamson Act allows for local jurisdictions to adopt implementing ordinances that accommodate a range of compatible uses for agricultural land and resource conservation. Claims that contract lands are incapable of being purposed for conservation activities run counter to the very language of the law. Before new proposals are considered by state lawmakers that may have the effect of hindering local discretion and undoing decades of conservation gains under the Act, state lawmakers should be reminded that ensuring local discretion is the only approach that ensures the act remains viable and functional, now and under the future policy changes.

Some stakeholders may claim the Act must be amended to allow the expedited execution of project development timelines, justifying mechanisms that allow contract holders to hurriedly break their agreements – or that the economics of such development necessitate the reduction or elimination of cancellation fees. However, this approach does not solve the several other layers of permit requirements necessary for new project development. Rather, counties that are supported by the State to decide contract matters, and that are better funded so that they can align local planning and zoning with agricultural land conservation goals, will be the ones who can offer developers the best path to project entitlement and execution. Allowing contract holders to break contracts in a hastened and unscheduled manner or without payment of cancellation fees or their equivalent will only create an unwieldy hodgepodge of parcels in contrast to managed land use design that occurs when planning and zoning decisions are made by jurisdictions in an organized manner.

In addition, the Act already includes programs that may allow for local governments and interested parties to achieve certain land use goals. First and foremost, the Act's **solar use easement** program (SB 618, 2011) already allows for solar development on lands certified by Department of Conservation as unable to continue in agricultural production. The program then allows for a simultaneous recission of an existing contract, for fee amounts less than those incurred from cancellations, followed by placement of an easement for solar production. In many ways, the SB 618 program in its current form

already achieves what certain development interests have sought in recent legislation, and may be the more appropriate route ~~to seek beneficial changes for solar developments~~ than ~~from~~ new legislation.

Similarly, AB 1265 (2011) affords counties with the ability to alternatively calculate land assessments, as well as to pursue non-renewals, through a nine-year contract process that, when in effect, may result in shorter conversion of contract properties into unencumbered properties, with an assessment formula that may provide counties with more net revenue over the period of those nine-year contract terms.

Policy Recommendation: RCRC should remain in conversation with interested parties, including solar and other renewables developers, and other development interests, as well as conservation interests, over the future of the Act.

With RCRC's history of strongly defending the Williamson Act, the ad hoc committee recommends that RCRC remain open to conversations with interested parties as circumstances rapidly change in the agricultural sector. New state groundwater rules, as well as successive years of curtailments through the state and federal water projects, means that traditional production agriculture will not be viable for at least some areas of the state in future years. Continued pressure on agriculture, especially on large-scale producers, means that some Capitol policymakers will agree with development interests that agricultural lands should be more freely converted to other uses. The committee recognizes that, over time, some landholders may be in a situation where allowing development on former contract lands remains their only viable economic option.

The Ad Hoc Committee recommends that the RCRC board and its staff productively engage in conversations with all stakeholders, in order to be at the table as decisions are considered, and so that RCRC's legacy of protecting the act remains at the fore of relevant conversations. And during any negotiations that involve amending the Act, if RCRC is unable to entirely hold the line, it should hold strong to these principles:

- (1) Preserving the Act remains paramount, including the resumption of state support.
- (2) The Act works best when local jurisdictions have maximum discretion over individual contract decisions, including cancellations, and not the state.
- (3) Any new program that would result in mass conversion of lands enrolled under the Act should not be permitted without the collective support of rural counties, and should be designed to allow for maximum local discretion and local benefit.
- (4) Any new or expanded pathway for development on Williamson Act lands subject to water constraints should include clear objective criteria ensuring that the affected lands are actually incapable of sustaining commercial agricultural production for the long-term. Such criteria should direct development away from prime lands to the greatest extent feasible.
- (5) Where practicable, RCRC should seek alignment with other

stakeholders dedicated to promoting agriculture and preserving agricultural land, while recognizing the importance of local control and protecting counties' unique interests.

Staff Recommendation

It is recommended that the RCRC Board of Directors consider and take action on the revised policy recommendations as set forth above. For next steps, the Williamson Act Ad Hoc Committee will continue dormant through December 31, 2026, and RCRC staff will consult with the Committee in the event of unforeseen developments not addressed by the foregoing revised policy recommendations or RCRC Policy Principles.

Attachments

- January 2025 “Williamson Act Ad Hoc Committee Final Report” Memo
- June 2025 “Presentation and Board Discussion Regarding Reauthorization of the Williamson Act Ad Hoc Committee to Guide RCRC’s Engagement on Assembly Bill 1156” Memo



To: Members of the RCRC Board of Directors

From: Supervisor Geri Byrne, Modoc County, Williamson Act Ad Hoc Committee Chair
Supervisor Sue Hoek, Nevada County, Williamson Act Ad Hoc Committee Vice Chair
(Staff: Sidd Nag, Policy Advocate)

Date: December 31, 2024

Re: Williamson Act Ad Hoc Committee Final Report - **ACTION**

Summary

This memo summarizes the work of the Williamson Act Ad Hoc Committee, and provides policy recommendations for the RCRC Board of Directors to adopt for ongoing advocacy, as well as to incorporate into its current or future policy principles.

Background

At the direction of the RCRC Board of Directors, the Williamson Act Ad Hoc Committee was formed in January 2024 for the purposes of exploring agricultural land conservation in member counties, and to generate recommendations for consideration by the full RCRC Board for incorporation into RCRC's future work. Over the calendar year, the Ad Hoc Committee met with policymakers and issue experts, including Department of Conservation staff, county assessors, and farm advocacy organizations.

The following are recommendations to the full RCRC Board by the Ad Hoc Committee.

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governments to ensure their agricultural lands are conserved for current and future agricultural production, as well as for open space and resources conservation.

Despite the long-standing success of the Act (2025 being its six-decade anniversary), some have questioned whether it should continue to promote agricultural land conservation through its unique mechanism of below-market property tax assessments in an era of several competing demands for developable land, including for housing production and renewables development. While those economic forces have existed for years, the passage of new housing and climate laws over the past two decades, along with continued prioritization of housing and climate issues by state policymakers, has brought new pressure to policymakers to allow conversion of contract lands.

While these development pressures may eventually prompt changes to the Act, there are certain principles RCRC should still consider as bedrock, including:

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Every county that participates in the Williamson Act today does so at a significant cost to their local budget, and without state support—despite the increased administrative burden that counties bear to maintain and implement the program. Furthermore, county budgets are increasingly under pressure from existing and new state mandates requiring expanded access to mental health care, mandating compliance with new housing and planning rules, and increasing labor and project input costs.

Even with these growing pressures on local budgets, and despite the continued popularity of the Act by contract holders and land conservation advocates alike, the state continues to disinvest in the Act. RCRC believes that instead of leaving local jurisdictions to bear all costs and burdens, the State should:

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- (2) Consider new mechanisms to fund the administration of the program, as more of the administrative burden of implementing the Act has fallen to counties. This includes the rerouting of cancellation fees to counties for their collection.

Cancellation fees exist in the Act to disincentivize land holders from removing lands from conserved status, as well as to partially compensate government for years of costs spent to maintain the program. However, while counties bear the vast share of costs, cancellation fees are still directed to the State despite its increasingly minimal role in administering the Act. As the State continues to pare back its Williamson Act program activity at Department of Conservation, RCRC should clearly express to lawmakers that rescission and cancellation fees should instead be redirected back to local governments for their ongoing costs.

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The Ad Hoc Committee recommends that the RCRC board and its staff productively engage in conversations with all stakeholders, in order to be at the table as decisions are considered, and so that RCRC's legacy of protecting the act remains at the fore of relevant conversations. And during any negotiations that involve amending the Act, if RCRC is unable to entirely hold the line, it should hold strong to these principles:

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support.

- (2) The Act works best when local jurisdictions have maximum discretion over individual contract decisions, including cancellations, and **not** the state.
- (3) Any new program that would result in mass conversion of lands enrolled under the Act should not be permitted without the collective support of rural counties, and should be designed to allow for maximum local discretion and local benefit.

Staff Recommendation

It is recommended that the RCRC Board of Directors consider and take action on the policy recommendations.



To: Members of the RCRC Board of Directors
From: Mary-Ann Warmerdam, Senior Vice President Governmental Affairs
Date: June 23, 2025
Re: Presentation and Board Discussion Regarding Reauthorization of the Williamson Act Ad Hoc Committee to Guide RCRC's Engagement on Assembly Bill 1156 – **ACTION**

The RCRC Board of Directors established a Williamson Act Ad Hoc committee in 2024, which delivered its report earlier this year (attached). This report, which was approved by the full Board, expressed strong support for the Williamson Act in general, and "first and foremost" its role in agricultural land preservation. However, the report also recognized that due to increasing restrictions on water availability, among other factors, "traditional production agriculture will not be viable for at least some areas of the state in future years." The Ad Hoc Committee recommended that RCRC remain in conversation with all stakeholders and "be at the table" as future decisions are made in this area, with guiding principles that include preserving local control so that counties "have maximum discretion over individual contract decisions." The Committee specifically noted several existing authorities that attempt to balance all of these interests, including the SB 618 "solar use easement" program, and recommended that future efforts for "beneficial change" should focus on these existing mechanisms.

Assembly Bill 1156 (Wicks) arises at the confluence of these issues. The bill proposes to amend the SB 618 solar use easement program to substantially expand the properties eligible for conversion from Williamson Act contracts (restricted to agricultural and compatible uses) into "solar use easements" (restricted to solar power generation facilities), including properties with insufficient water availability. RCRC has engaged actively with the author and sponsors of this bill and achieved significant improvements, including elimination of proposals to authorize the California Energy Commission to approve such conversions, and incorporation of several other measures to protect local control. Nonetheless, AB 1156 remains highly controversial, with agricultural interests split on the matter. RCRC currently supports the bill's provisions protecting local control; however, concerns have been raised that support for AB 1156 may be in tension with RCRC's historically strong commitment to agricultural land preservation.

The RCRC Board of Directors is requested to reauthorize the Williamson Act Ad Hoc Committee to guide RCRC's efforts through these difficult issues as AB 1156 continues to evolve. If approved, the Committee would be specifically empowered to advise RCRC

staff regarding all aspects of engagement on Assembly Bill 1156, including RCRC's official position in the bill. Six of the Committee's members remain on the RCRC Board:

Chair, Supervisor Geri Byrne, Modoc County
Vice Chair, Supervisor Sue Hoek, Nevada County
Supervisor Dennis Townsend, Tulare County
Supervisor Anne Cottrell, Napa County
Supervisor Aaron Albaugh, Lassen County
Supervisor Daurice Smith, Colusa County

As part of today's action, it is recommended that the Board appoint a seventh member to the Williamson Act Ad Hoc Committee (to replace Supervisor Jack Garamendi, who has left the RCRC Board). RCRC Chair, Supervisor Geri Byrne, Modoc County, recommends appointing Supervisor John Peschong, San Luis Obispo County, for this position.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Directors take the following actions:

- Appoint Supervisor John Peschong, San Luis Obispo County, to serve on the Williamson Act Ad Hoc Committee (along with the six continuing members noted above).
- Reauthorize and empower the Williamson Act Ad Hoc Committee to guide RCRC's engagement on Assembly Bill 1156, including RCRC's official position on that bill.

Attachments

- Williamson Act Ad Hoc Committee Final Report
- Assembly Bill 1156 (May 23, 2025 Current Version)



KAREN ROSS was appointed Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture on January 9, 2019 by Governor Gavin Newsom. In re-appointing Secretary Ross, Governor Newsom cited her unmatched leadership experience in agricultural issues nationally, internationally, and here in California, in areas including environmental stewardship, climate change adaptation, and trade. Secretary Ross was initially appointed by Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. in 2011.

Before joining CDFA, Secretary Ross was chief of staff for U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, a position she accepted in 2009. Prior to that appointment, she served as President of the California Association of Winegrape

Growers from 1996- 2009, and as Vice-President of the Agricultural Council of California from 1989-1996. Her prior experience before moving to California included staff work for a United States Senator, a presidential candidate, and government relations for rural electric cooperatives and public power districts.

Secretary Ross is passionate about fostering the reconnection of consumers to the land and the people who produce their food, and to improving the access of all California citizens to healthy, nutritious California-grown agricultural products, celebrated for their diversity and abundance in serving local, national and global markets.

During Secretary Ross' tenure, the Department has focused on core functions to protect and promote California agriculture, investing in the Department's employees to provide the best service to farmers, ranchers and consumers and fostering an agricultural industry that embraces its role as a global leader on everything from the most technical aspects of farming to the broadest environmental imperatives.

Secretary Ross has strengthened partnerships across government, academia and the non-profit sector in the drive to maintain and improve environmental stewardship and to develop adaptation strategies for the specific impacts of climate change. She has initiated programs to provide greater opportunities for farmers and ranchers to engage in sustainable environmental stewardship practices through water conservation, energy efficiency, nutrient management, and ecosystem services; and she has worked to provide greater access to farm-fresh foods at school cafeterias through CDFA's Farm to Fork Program.

Secretary Ross Bio

Page 2

Secretary Ross grew up as a 4-H kid on a farm in western Nebraska. She owns 800 acres of the family farm where her recently retired younger brother, a fourth-generation farmer, is mentoring a new, beginning farmer in growing no-till wheat and feed grains, incorporating cover crops and rotational grazing for beef production. The Secretary has a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and is a graduate of the Nebraska Ag Leadership Program. She has served on numerous boards and committees in California agriculture and with various academic institutions.

Business and Administrative Matters



To: Members of the RCRC Board of Directors
From: Patrick Blacklock, President and CEO
Date: January 13, 2026
Re: RCRC Resolution 26-02: Board of Directors Code of Conduct, including Proposed Revisions – **ACTION**

Attached is the 2025 RCRC Board Code of Conduct, as adopted by the RCRC Board of Directors on January 8, 2025 (RCRC Resolution 25-02). Also, attached is a proposed revised version that has been recommended for adoption in 2026 by the RCRC Executive Committee.

At the September 2025 Board of Directors meeting, two items on the agenda, the Proposition 50 feedback discussion and the PG&E presentation, prompted significant and at times spirited discussion. Feedback from both Board members and external stakeholders following that meeting indicate that some felt the discussion was, in a few instances, inconsistent with the spirit of the Code of Conduct. Thereafter, the Executive Committee discussed that feedback at its October 2025 meeting, and provided guidance to staff on ways to strengthen the RCRC Board Code of Conduct.

The attached revised version incorporates changes based on the Executive Committee's guidance. The significant changes include:

- Establish an expectation of especially courteous treatment for guest speakers.
- Explicitly affirm the authority of the Chair to manage Board meetings, including the power to declare a recess if necessary to preserve decorum – and express the responsibility of the Chair, Officers, and RCRC President to intervene and counsel any members responsible for a disturbance.
- Codify a censure process managed by the Executive Committee that includes both due process and “progressive discipline” as appropriate.
- Require each new member of the Board to sign an express acknowledgement that they have received and reviewed the Code.

The Executive Committee considered the proposed changes at its November 2025 meeting and recommended that these changes be included in the Code of Conduct presented to the Board of Directors for adoption in January 2026.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board of Directors review and approve RCRC Resolution 26-02: Board of Directors Code of Conduct, which includes the revisions recommended by the Executive Committee.

Attachments

- Proposed RCRC Resolution 26-02: RCRC Board Code of Conduct (2026)
- RCRC Resolution 25-02: RCRC Board Code of Conduct (2025)

RCRC RESOLUTION 26-02

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES OF CALIFORNIA APPROVING AND AUTHORIZING RCRC BOARD OF DIRECTORS CODE OF CONDUCT

RCRC Board Code of Conduct

Introduction

The Board of Directors of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) is committed to ensuring that its members perform their duties with integrity and respect; and honorably represent RCRC members, and the counties and public they serve. The following Code of Conduct establishes ethical standards and serves as a guide for Board Members' performance of the duties of office. The Code of Conduct was adopted by the Board of Directors on January 21, 2026.

Members of the RCRC Board of Directors agree to abide by the following rules of conduct and behavior:

1. We are committed to the highest ideals of honor, integrity, and due diligence.
2. We subscribe to the concepts of democratic, effective, and efficient governance by responsible, knowledgeable members of the Board of Directors and Committees with the understanding that official decisions made, and actions taken are always made in the best interest of the organization's membership.
3. Accurate and timely communication is vital to our process. We will share information frequently, accurately, and succinctly.
4. We recognize our obligation to comply with the organization's Conflict of Interest policy and shall file annual statements as required by the policy and the Fair Political Practices Commission.
5. We recognize that we cannot participate in or attempt to influence a decision that could have a reasonably foreseeable impact on our personal or financial interests.
6. We do not accept gifts, favors, or promises of future benefits that might compromise our independent judgment or action, or create the appearance of being compromised.
7. When participating in RCRC activities, we will treat all individuals, issues, and organizations in a fair and respectful manner. We understand that individuals invited to address the Board of Directors or an RCRC-affiliated committee are our guests, and we will treat them with appropriate and hospitable courtesy at all times.
8. We are sworn to act in accordance with all applicable laws of the United States and the State of California in the performance of our official duties. Not doing so may constitute serious misconduct.

9. We will conduct Board meetings with decorum and in accordance with all directives of the presiding officer (usually the RCRC Chair) that are consistent with applicable law, the Bylaws, and this code of conduct.
 - a. The presiding officer will manage Board meetings to facilitate the efficient conduct of RCRC business, while maintaining decorum, providing all members with an opportunity to civilly express their views, and ensuring compliance with this code of conduct.
 - b. In the event of any disturbance during a Board meeting, or the occurrence of any conduct in violation of this code of conduct, the Chair may declare a short recess to permit the restoration of order. The Chair, any other RCRC Officer, or the RCRC President may informally counsel or admonish any member responsible for the disorder as an initial step towards compliance with this code of conduct. This paragraph does not limit any other remedies that may be available to the presiding officer or the Board.
10. We treat each other with mutual respect and remain civil, even when in disagreement. We offer constructive criticism to others directly and in a positive manner that respects individual dignity. We welcome constructive feedback to ourselves as an opportunity for professional improvement.
11. We are committed to maintaining an organization and a workplace that is free from unlawful discrimination and harassment. Board members shall act in accordance with RCRC's Anti-Harassment and Anti-Discrimination Policy (Section 702 of the RCRC Employee Handbook). While all forms of harassment are prohibited, it is the organization's policy to emphasize that sexual harassment is specifically prohibited and will not be tolerated. Complaints alleging discrimination or harassment by or towards any Board member will be investigated promptly and as confidentially as possible by the President or their designee.
12. We abide by the processes and rules of order established by the RCRC Bylaws and this code of conduct.
13. We accurately and honestly represent the official policies and positions of RCRC and make clear distinctions between such policy and our individual positions and opinions.
14. We respect the collective authority of the Board and shall not suggest anything is RCRC policy unless previously approved by the Board.
15. We adhere to the following regarding potential individual member county agenda requests:
 - a. Initial requests are to be made to the RCRC President, or an RCRC Senior Vice President;
 - b. If staff has questions regarding the request for placement on the Board agenda, the request will be forwarded to the RCRC Officers for a determination; and
 - c. If necessary, the request will be presented to the RCRC Executive Committee for a determination of whether the request should be placed on the RCRC Board agenda.

16. We are obligated to protect the confidential nature of information provided in Closed Session. We are committed to compliance with the Brown Act, Public Records Act and all other applicable laws.
17. As Board members, we shall refrain from directing the day-to-day operations of RCRC staff, except as may be authorized by the President or an RCRC Senior Vice President.
18.
 - a. The Board may discipline a member, including one who violates RCRC's Bylaws, commits a violation determined to be serious misconduct pursuant to this code of conduct or violates applicable laws.
 - b. Without limiting any disciplinary power of the Board, the Executive Committee may approve, upon presentation by the Chair and a two-thirds vote of the full membership, a resolution censuring any member of the RCRC Board of Directors. For purposes of this code, "censure" is a formal resolution of the Executive Committee, on behalf of RCRC, officially reprimanding a member of the Board of Directors for conduct in violation of this code, the Bylaws, or applicable law. The member regarding whom a resolution of censure is proposed shall be given at least 72 hours notice in writing prior to the Executive Committee meeting at which the resolution is considered, and shall be entitled to appear at the meeting and respond to the proposed censure.
 - c. The RCRC Chair and President, as applicable, may undertake such progressive measures as they deem appropriate to achieve compliance prior to proposing formal discipline, including verbal counseling as set forth in Section 9.b and/or written counseling issued by the President, in consultation with the Chair.

All RCRC Board members are expected to abide by this code of conduct and the attached expectations regarding organizational culture. Each new Delegate or Alternate member of the RCRC Board of Directors first appointed after February 1, 2026 will further be expected to sign an acknowledgement that they have received and reviewed a copy of this code of conduct.

I hereby certify that the above Resolution was approved by the Board of Directors of the Rural County Representatives of California, on January 21, 2026.

Signature

Name: Supervisor Miles Menetrey
Title: 2026 RCRC Chair

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Expectations of Board Members

1. Always focus on what's best for the organization as a whole and represent the entire membership as well as your individual county.
2. Maintain good board relationships and visibly demonstrate respect for, and fairly represent, each other.
3. Be sensitive to your public image and conduct at all times.
4. Be respectful, open, candid, honest and fair:
 - a. Explain your perspective, rationale, and reasoning.
 - b. Remember that respect for debate, differing of opinion, and reasoning mitigates polarization.
5. Do your homework, be prepared when bringing an item to the Board, be as concise as possible, and don't repeat comments previously made by another Board Member.
6. Recognizing that the Board is the staff's priority:
 - a. Provide clear direction to staff.
 - b. Recognize that expressing concerns to staff is appropriate but does not constitute policy direction.
 - c. Recognize the sensitivity of personnel matters; direct all personnel concerns or complaints to the President or an RCRC Senior Vice President and do not publicly discuss personnel issues.
7. Briefly provide Board Member report backs/comments/issues during member county concerns.
8. When interacting with individuals or other agencies, clarify that you are only one of 40 decision makers.

Expectations of Staff

1. Provide excellent service to the Board and show respect to the Board and the public.
2. Accept full ownership for your assigned responsibilities.
3. Present accurate and thorough staff reports:
 - a. Give pros, cons, alternatives, and a recommendation when appropriate.
 - b. Stay well organized and manage your time wisely.
4. While remaining in compliance with the Brown Act, apprise Board Members in advance of:
 - a. Meetings and special projects in, as well as staff visits to, their counties.

- b. Any controversial issues or conversations; don't surprise the Board, especially on any "hot button" issues.
 - c. Any "bad news".
 - d. Deadlines that are slipping and why.
- 5. Set realistic deadlines, be proactive with regard to issues that need to be resolved and produce timely documents.
- 6. Work cooperatively, demonstrate cooperation among staff, support each other, and be sensitive to each other's workloads.
- 7. Be loyal to the organization and be sensitive to your public image and conduct at all times.
- 8. Do not participate in political activity while on duty.

RCRC RESOLUTION 25-02

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES OF CALIFORNIA APPROVING AND AUTHORIZING RCRC BOARD OF DIRECTORS CODE OF CONDUCT

RCRC Board Code of Conduct

Introduction

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3. Accurate and timely communication is vital to our process. We will share information frequently, accurately, and succinctly.
4. We recognize our obligation to comply with the organization's Conflict of Interest policy and shall file annual statements as required by the policy and the Fair Political Practices Commission.
5. We recognize that we cannot participate in or attempt to influence a decision that could have a reasonably foreseeable impact on our personal or financial interests.
6. We do not accept gifts, favors, or promises of future benefits that might compromise our independent judgment or action, or create the appearance of being compromised.
7. When participating in RCRC activities, we will treat all individuals, issues, and organizations in a fair and respectful manner.
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10. We are committed to maintaining an organization and a workplace that is free from unlawful discrimination and harassment. Board members shall act in accordance with RCRC's Anti-Harassment and Anti-Discrimination Policy (Section 702 of the RCRC Employee Handbook). While all forms of harassment are prohibited, it is the organization's policy to emphasize that sexual harassment is specifically prohibited and will not be tolerated. Complaints alleging discrimination or harassment by or towards any Board member will be investigated promptly and as confidentially as possible by the President or their designee.
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16. As Board members, we shall refrain from directing the day-to-day operations of RCRC staff, except as may be authorized by the President or an RCRC Senior Vice President.
17. The Board may discipline a member, including one who violates RCRC's Bylaws, commits a violation determined to be serious misconduct pursuant to this code of conduct or violates applicable laws.

All RCRC Board members are expected to abide by this code of conduct and the attached expectations regarding organizational culture.

I hereby certify that the above Resolution was approved by the Board of Directors of the Rural County Representatives of California, on January 8, 2025.


Signature

Name: Supervisor Geri Byrne
Title: 2025 RCRC Chair

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Expectations of Board Members

1. Always focus on what's best for the organization as a whole and represent the entire membership as well as your individual county.
2. Maintain good board relationships and visibly demonstrate respect for, and fairly represent, each other.
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4. Be respectful, open, candid, honest and fair:
 - a. Explain your perspective, rationale, and reasoning.
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 - c. Any "bad news".
 - d. Deadlines that are slipping and why.
5. Set realistic deadlines, be proactive with regard to issues that need to be resolved and produce timely documents.
6. Work cooperatively, demonstrate cooperation among staff, support each other, and be sensitive to each other's workloads.
7. Be loyal to the organization and be sensitive to your public image and conduct at all times.
8. Do not participate in political activity while on duty.

Governmental Affairs



To: Members of the RCRC Board of Directors

From: Leigh Kammerich, Senior Policy Advocate
John Kennedy, Senior Policy Advocate
Tracy Rhine, Senior Policy Advocate

Date: January 9, 2026

Re: California Public Utilities Commission Update

Summary

RCRC has been a formal participant in over two dozen regulatory proceedings at the California Public Utilities Commission (“CPUC” or “Commission”), fourteen of which are still active, and closely monitors many tangential issues that affect rural counties. This memo provides a contemporary summary of the issues RCRC has most recently engaged in before the CPUC. A comprehensive listing of open proceedings RCRC participates in can be found in Attachment 1.

Background

Since becoming a formal participant in the proceeding concerning how utilities safeguard their infrastructure and conduct de-energization of their power lines to reduce wildfire risk, RCRC has engaged in multiple interrelated CPUC proceedings on a wide variety of energy issues. Additionally, RCRC is involved in several regulatory proceedings related to broadband infrastructure, energy reliability, public water system consolidations, and is a joint party with Environmental Services Joint Powers Authority (ESJPA) relating to mandates and strategies to reduce emissions from short-lived climate pollutants. RCRC engages not only with the CPUC, but also with the Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety at the California Natural Resources Agency on utility Wildfire Mitigation Plans, as well as the California Energy Commission on an array of topics from energy developer opt-in project permitting to zero-emission vehicle infrastructure investments.

Communications Issues

- At the CPUC’s December 18th Voting Meeting, the Commission closed the Affordability Proceeding, which developed an affordability framework across the energy, telecom, and water utility sectors. Unfortunately, a last-minute revision removed the broadband essential service benchmark (established in 2020) of 100/20 Mbps at the urging of the telecom industry.¹ This continues a troubling trend of the CPUC’s Commissioners to diminish accountability (and, in turn, the quality

¹ Notably, the current minimum service level set by the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) is 100/20 Mbps.

of consumer choice) in the communications sector specifically. For instance, earlier in year, the CPUC declined to add minimum service quality standards for wireless service, and continues to contemplate major changes to universal voice service through its Carrier of Last Resort (COLR) rules.

Carrier of Last Resort Rules Proceeding

RCRC is an active, formal party to the Commission rulemaking opened in June 2024 to consider updates and changes to Carrier of Last Resort (COLR) rules, which ensures universal access to essential telecommunications service—i.e. basic telephone service—to any resident or business customer upon request, and at affordable prices. This proceeding was initiated immediately following the CPUC’s rejection of AT&T’s Application for COLR Relief, but the outcomes of this proceeding will equally apply to all 16 COLRs in the state, of which AT&T is the largest.

On December 15th, the CPUC issued a Staff Proposal outlining how the Commission could consider modernizing access to essential communications service, including how the Commission could consider defining areas of “significant consumer choice” (i.e. well-served) and the process for which carriers could pursue regulatory relief. RCRC staff is reviewing the CPUC Staff Report under the direction and priorities of the RCRC COLR Ad Hoc committee and will be providing feedback to uphold the ubiquity, resiliency, and functionality of essential communications service; modernization should be encouraged, but must occur equitably, especially in high-cost, rural, and frontier regions that disproportionately rely on legacy (copper) voice networks for public safety, emergency response, and economic participation.

Energy Issues

- At the December 18, 2025 Voting Meeting, the CPUC set the authorized return on equity (ROE) for the state’s largest Investor-Owned Utilities (IOUs) at just under 10%, effectively defining the profit margin shareholders may earn on capital investments.² This is lower than the 11.30% ROE requested by PG&E and 11.75% by Southern California Edison, and greater than the 9.25-9.60% average range proposed by consumer intervenors.
- On December 18th, RCRC testified at the CPUC Voting Meeting to object to a Proposed Decision that would terminate the state’s BioMAT program on December 31, 2025. Although state statute establishing BioMAT does not include a sunset date, a prior CPUC Decision set the program’s end for 2025. In its opposition letter and testimony, RCRC argued the termination is arbitrary, unlawful, and will have damaging consequences for important wildfire prevention and waste management efforts. RCRC joins a coalition of stakeholders—including the Bioenergy Association of California, Pioneer Community Energy, and several agricultural and energy organizations—in urging the CPUC to maintain the program. RCRC continues to work in close collaboration with stakeholders for a successor program.

² A CPUC Fact Sheet on this Decision can be accessed here: <https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/-/media/cpuc-website/industries-and-topics/documents/energy/electric-energy/electric-costs/cost-of-capital-fact-sheet.pdf>

Safety, Reliability and Resiliency of Electrical Distribution Systems

RCRC is a formal party to a CPUC rulemaking to examine and consider changes to existing practices concerning the safety, reliability, and resiliency of electrical distribution systems. RCRC has a long requested that utility “fast trip” programs be regulated and, to the extent practicable, be more standardized across investor-owned utilities (IOUs) to minimize inequities and ensure consistent execution, including (but not limited to) with program reporting, operational guidelines, resource deployments, mitigation strategies, and general resiliency.

On January 9th, RCRC submitted comments on a draft Customer Reliability Report Template developed jointly by the large IOUs. Ultimately, this Report will be used by all utilities to improve, and potentially streamline, reporting obligations by unifying its compliance filings in a more consistent manner. Overall, the Customer Reliability Report would add more granularity that is critical to identify issues caused by fast-trip operations. RCRC is particularly interested in ensuring remediation of repetitive outages in specific areas and ensure ratepayer investments in wildfire safety hardening (such as undergrounding and covered conductor) realize the reliability benefits promised by utilities.

RCRC also expressed concerns that the Joint IOUs propose to base reliability reports on a five-year lookback period for comparative purposes. Given the dramatic decline in reliability resulting from PSPS and fast-trip outages, a five-year lookback would paint a very misleading picture of historic reliability trends, establish current experiences as the status quo, and give customers little hope they will regain reliable, continuous access to electricity—which is particularly problematic in a state with such aggressive electrification ambitions.

Staff Recommendation

Staff will continue to participate in these proceedings and related issues that impact RCRC member counties.

Attachments

- RCRC Open CPUC Proceedings List
- RCRC Comments, Joint IOU's Customer Reliability Report Template (January 9, 2026)

RCRC OPEN CPUC PROCEEDINGS LIST

PROCEEDING	PROCEEDING NUMBER*	FORMAL PARTY STATUS DATE	DESCRIPTION	STAFF CONTACT
1. Microgrids	<u>R.19-09-009</u>	February 4, 2020	Framework for the commercialization of microgrids to achieve community resiliency.	John Kennedy Leigh Kammerich
2. Self-Generation Incentive Program (SGIP)	<u>R.20-05-012</u>	August 20, 2020	Incentive funding for large IOU customer-level energy storage resources to reduce peak energy demand.	John Kennedy Leigh Kammerich
3. Broadband	<u>R.20-09-001</u>	November 19, 2020	Takes near- and medium-term actions to deploy reliable, fast and affordable internet services to all Californians.	Tracy Rhine
4. Biomethane Standards and Requirements	<u>R.13-02-008</u>	January 18, 2022	Implements SB 1440, requiring the CPUC to adopt biomethane procurement targets as a cost-effective means to reduce short-lived climate pollutants and other GHG emissions.	John Kennedy Staci Heaton
5. General Order 133	<u>R.22-03-016</u>	April 26, 2022	Considers changes to minimum service quality standards of Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP), wireless, and broadband service and examines existing enforcement protocols to improve substandard service.	Tracy Rhine Leigh Kammerich
6. Water System Acquisitions	<u>R.22-04-003</u>	July 29, 2022	Reviews the existing framework regarding public water system acquisitions/consolidations under the CPUC's jurisdiction and seeks to update the Commission's policies that will guide future water mergers.	Leigh Kammerich
7. BEAD Program	<u>R.23-02-016</u>	August 31, 2023	Considers rules to implement federal Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program for last mile infrastructure.	Tracy Rhine Leigh Kammerich
8. High DER	<u>R.21-06-017</u>	October 10, 2023	Seeks to prepare the electric grid for a high number of distributed energy resources (DER). (DERs are small-scale	John Kennedy Leigh Kammerich

PROCEEDING	PROCEEDING NUMBER*	FORMAL PARTY STATUS DATE	DESCRIPTION	STAFF CONTACT
			energy objects, such as EV batteries or rooftop solar, that can be connected or shifted to the distribution system.)	
9. DIVCA Changes	<u>R.23-04-006</u>	October 31, 2023	Considers changes to the CPUC's oversight and licensing of cable franchisees under the Digital Infrastructure and Video Competition Act (DIVCA) of 2006.	Tracy Rhine Leigh Kammerich
10. Energization Timelines	<u>R.24-01-018</u>	February 20, 2024	Implements AB 50 (2023) and SB 410 (2023) to set timelines for the energization of electrical corporation customers to ensure timely service.	John Kennedy Leigh Kammerich
11. Renewables Portfolio Standard, Continued	<u>R.24-01-017</u>	March 13, 2024	Continues the implementation, oversight, and administration of the California RPS program; will incorporate future legislation as mandated.	John Kennedy Leigh Kammerich
12. Safety, Reliability and Resiliency of Electricity	<u>R.24-05-023</u>	July 8, 2024	Considers changes to existing policies, procedures, and rules regarding the safety, reliability and resiliency of electrical distribution systems.	John Kennedy Leigh Kammerich
13. COLR Changes	<u>R.24-06-012</u>	July 25, 2024	Considers changes to Carrier of Last Resort (COLR) rules governing universal access to essential telecommunications services.	Tracy Rhine Leigh Kammerich
14. Telecom Emergency Preparedness and Network Resiliency	<u>R.25-07-014</u>	September 30, 2025	Considers modifications to the current network resiliency rules for communication service providers.	Tracy Rhine Leigh Kammerich
Wildfire Mitigation Plans**	<u>Energy Safety Docket</u>	N/A	Comprehensive plans to construct, maintain and operate electrical lines and equipment to reduce the risk of wildfire updated on an annual basis.	Leigh Kammerich

*To access the Proceeding Docket, please click on the hyperlink provided.

**Note, the Wildfire Mitigations Plan Proceeding is no longer open at the CPUC and has migrated to the Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety (Energy Safety or OEIS)

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

*Order Instituting Rulemaking to Update Rules for
the Safety, Reliability, and Resiliency of Electrical
Distribution Systems*

Rulemaking 24-05-023
(Filed May 30, 2024)

OPENING COMMENTS OF RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES OF CALIFORNIA ON JOINT IOU PROPOSED CUSTOMER RELIABILITY REPORT TEMPLATE

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Dated: January 9, 2026

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

*Order Instituting Rulemaking to Update Rules for
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OPENING COMMENTS OF RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES OF CALIFORNIA ON JOINT IOU PROPOSED CUSTOMER RELIABILITY REPORT TEMPLATE

I. Introduction

Pursuant to Rule 6.2 of the California Public Utilities Commission (“Commission” or “CPUC”) Rules of Practice and Procedure, the Rural County Representatives of California (“RCRC”) submits comments to *Assigned Commissioner and Administrative Law Judges Ruling Modifying Track 1 Schedule of Activities* (“Ruling”), issued August 22, 2025, and later revised on October 27, 2025 pursuant to *Email Ruling RE Issuance of Ruling Modifying Track 2*. RCRC is an association of forty rural California counties, and our Board of Directors is comprised of an elected Supervisor from each of our member counties.

II. Comments

RCRC appreciates the development of the Joint IOU’s proposed Customer Reliability Report template as a useful starting point, but we are concerned that some aspects will completely undermine its meaningfulness if not modified. We appreciate the inclusion of meter-level outage histories for customers and flags for Protective Equipment and Device Settings (PEDS)¹ operations, reclosing status, and cause categories. This granularity is critical to identify patterns and burdens that rural, tribal, and disadvantaged

¹ Colloquially known as “fast-trip” outages. RCRC uses the term PEDS and fast-trip interchangeably.

residents experience. This information will also help identify priority system improvements to reduce outage frequencies. At the same time, we are gravely concerned the five-year lookback period will set an unacceptable new normal that papers over a massive reduction in reliability experienced over the last 5-7 years.

RCRC appreciates the opportunity to respond to questions posed in Section 4.1 of the Ruling to increase transparency, drive greater accountability, and strengthen public access to data. RCRC may offer supplemental input or refinements in its reply comments should additional issues arise from parties' opening comments.

1. *Is the scope of data the Joint IOUs are required to submit via their Customer Reliability Report reasonable? What, if any, enhancements should the Commission consider to improve the transparency of the data presented in the Customer Reliability Report?*

RCRC strongly objects to the Joint IOU's attempt to determine customer and circuit reliability based on experiences over the previous five years. Energy reliability in rural California has declined significantly over the last several years as utilities have attempted to reduce the risk of utility-caused wildfire ignitions. Widespread Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) events that began in 2019 have been supplanted by thousands of fast-trip, known as Enhanced Powerline Safety Setting (EPSS) outages in PG&E service territory, beginning in 2021 with over 2,000 outages annually over the last four years. Characterizing "reliability" based on experiences over the previous five years effectively makes the current lack of reliability the new status quo and undermines the urgency with which PG&E in particular must act to reduce the 20-30 outages that many circuits have experienced annually over the last several years.

2. *Does the draft Joint IOU Customer Reliability Report Template efficiently streamline:*
a. Reporting thresholds;

The template's focus on Customers Experiencing Multiple Interruptions (CEMI) \geq 5 and Customers Experiencing Long Interruption Duration (CELID) \geq 8 is constructive, but RCRC recommends an explicit repetitive outage threshold—for example, four or more unplanned events per customer (or circuit/segment) per year that triggers requiring identification of not only the problem, but also activities planned to reduce the frequency of future outages. RCRC has emphasized the need to spotlight and fix segments with repeated failures. Several circuits have experienced 10, 15, or even more than 20 EPSS

outages annually for multiple years with little to no insight into the activities that have been performed (or are planned) to reduce the frequency of future outages. RCRC has repeatedly sought this information from PG&E to no avail. This leaves customers with little hope that basic needs like access to continuous electricity will ever become the norm again.

b. Standardized definitions; and

RCRC does not object to the IOU's proposal to use IEEE 1366 and IEEE 1782 cause categories. However, mandatory sub-category fields are needed to capture animal, object, and vegetation detail beyond the top-level basic cause.

c. Alignment with industry standards?

The template's mapping to Wildfire Mitigation Data Report (WMRD) schemas (transmission/distribution assets, grid hardening, inspection, vegetation) is an efficient way to avoid duplicate reporting and link reliability outcomes to mitigations. RCRC supports this approach but requests that IOUs explicitly join customer reliability results to WMRD initiatives for circuits with poor performance so the Commission and ratepayers can see whether and when safety investments translate into reliability improvements.

3. What is the most reasonable frequency of submission of Customer Reliability Reports to the Commission?

The IOUs request an annual reporting cadence aligned with July 15 Electric Reliability Reports. RCRC recommends semi-annual reporting: A semi-annual Customer Reliability Report (e.g. mid-year and end-year) with quarterly data availability for stakeholders would balance accuracy with resource constraints to meet the need for near-term oversight.

While semi-annual reporting may be appropriate for general reliability assessments, *it is imperative that existing obligations for PG&E to submit monthly fast-trip summaries continue.*² These monthly submissions have been vital for residents, stakeholders, local governments, and the state to obtain timely information about the frequent and widespread fast-trip outages that disrupt power to millions of Californians and occur over 2,000 times a year. Some circuits experience as many as nine fast-trip outages

² Currently, only PG&E provides monthly EPSS reporting. However, RCRC supports monthly reporting for all IOU PEDS program outages.

in a single month and 30 outages over the course of a year—outages that often last several hours to as much as a full day. Given the frequency of fast-trip outages and the economic, health, and public safety dislocation they create, we must maintain timely visibility into these events that an annual cadence cannot provide. RCRC has previously asked the CPUC to incorporate PG&E’s monthly EPSS reports in this proceeding record and to standardize respective fast-trip reporting across IOUs; we renew that request here.

Lastly, RCRC does not oppose providing IOUs at least six months to provide the first report once the template is finalized.³

4. *Do the proposed requirements for future Customer Reliability Reports sufficiently capture the data needed to aid the Commission’s understanding of whether there are patterns of outages that disproportionately affect tribal governments, rural, disadvantaged, and/or low-income communities?*

While the template includes important information on demographic, economic, and population factors, RCRC is deeply concerned that the Joint IOU’s seek to paint a misleading picture of reliability and ultimately undermine meaningful understanding of what reliability looks like across the state.

The Customer Reliability Report could include a wealth of information about disadvantaged community (DAC) status, tribal designations, customer type (i.e. multi-family or medical baseline), etc. RCRC supports these but urges inclusion of a geospatial overlay of reliability metrics with CalEnviroScreen, high fire threat district (HFTD) tiers, and other indicators to identify statistically significant disparities in frequency/duration/causes at the tract or county level. RCRC also suggests including information about the number of medical baseline customers and critical facilities impacted, with outage history and information on notifications/mitigation actions to determine whether vulnerable customers received adequate communications, mitigation solutions, and restoration priority. Finally, the Customer Reliability Report should also include actionable remediation narratives for communities/circuits showing persistent disparities and repeated outages. These narratives should include timelines for implementation, measures included (like undergrounding, replacing bare wires with covered conductor, installation of animal guards, sectionalization, etc.), and anticipated reliability benefits/reduction in future outages.

³ Page 2, *Joint IOU Proposed Customer Reliability Report Template Pursuant to Administrative Law Judges Ruling*, December 15, 2025.

Unfortunately, these benefits and insights will be undermined by the Joint IOU's proposed comparison timeframe. The Joint IOU's template proposes to base reports on customer meters with a decline in average reliability based on experiences over the previous five years.⁴ While a five-year lookback would typically seem reasonable for comparative purposes, rural California residents have seen a tremendous decline in energy reliability over the last seven years as utilities have struggled to reduce the risk of wildfire ignitions. *As such, a five-year lookback will hinder efforts to increase reliability by establishing an artificial baseline that does not reflect historic experiences, and would skew reasonableness and ultimately accountability.*

PSPS events left millions of Californians without power for days (or weeks) at a time in 2019 and 2020. As a result of tremendous pressure from the state, utilities have significantly reduced the frequency, duration, and number of customers impacted by PSPS events; however, PG&E in particular has instead shifted from proactive planned de-energizations to reactive EPSS settings that cut power any time something comes into contact with powerlines (which are often bare wires). While we do not dispute the safety benefits to employ EPSS as a tool to avoid ignitions from utility infrastructure, they were intended as stop gap measure until more permanent system hardening work could be performed. Instead, rural Californians have experienced over 2,000 EPSS outages annually since 2021 and since that time, many of the same circuits continue to experience the greatest number of outages year after year. For instance, Templeton 2113 in San Luis Obispo County experienced 33 outages in 2024 and 30 outages in 2025. Several circuits have experienced six, seven, or even eight outages over a 30-day period. These experiences are unsustainable, but it is not clear from the template put forward by the Joint IOUs what efforts are being deployed to reduce outages on those circuits, or when improvements are expected to be completed. This must be addressed in the final Customer Reliability Report.

For these reasons, using a five-year lookback will paint a very misleading picture of historic reliability trends. At worst, a five-year lookback risks cementing today's reliability challenges in perpetuity as the long-term norm, leaving customers with little confidence they will ever regain dependable access to electricity in a state that prides itself on ambitious decarbonization goals, a world-class economy, and leadership in technological innovation.

⁴ Page 8, *Joint IOU Template*.

5. Are there any modifications or other consideration the Commission should consider when evaluating the Joint IOU's draft Customer Reliability Report Template?

First, the Commission should keep—then improve—the overhead (OH)/underground (UG) field, which is contrary to the Joint IOU's request to remove. The Joint IOUs suggest omitting the primary circuit overhead vs. underground requirement, arguing limited insight at the customer level.⁵ RCRC agrees that customer-level OH/UG *alone* is insufficient, but it should be retained and expanded to report the percent of OH vs. UG. The Customer Reliability Report should also indicate the conductor type (bare/covered/insulated) of the circuit or segment tied to each outage because fast-trip susceptibility and contact risk are materially different depending on whether the powerline is a covered conductor or bare wire. This is even more important when joined to cause codes and repetitive outage flags. This will also help customers understand whether their rates are translating into greater reliability and reduced wildfire risk.

Second, operational details for PEDS should be maintained, such as RapidFaultSetting (fast-trip) and ReclosureSetting, plus isolation device type. IOUs should be required to disclose device setting changes over time on high-burden circuits and correlate those changes with reliability trends. This would address RCRC's longstanding concerns about fast-trip programs causing recurring outages without clear improvement.

Third, repetitive outage reporting and remediation should be standardized. Specifically, a table listing of circuits/segments with CEMI ≥ 5 or ≥ 4 unplanned outages per year with 1) root cause analysis status; 2) planned mitigations with dates; and 3) interim customer support (e.g. back-up power programs, resilience hub energization options, etc.). Again, transparency is needed with respect to future actions intended to address the underlying issues and increase reliability.

Fourth, alignment of the template's Section 4 to the Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety (OEIS) is helpful. RCRC recommends the Commission consolidate redundant reporting and formally integrate EPSS (and PEDS) monthly reports and WMDR quarterly spatial reports into the Customer Reliability Report record for ease of access.

Lastly, IOUs should have public participation and community dashboards. This could improve outage communication and criteria over time. Links to the dashboards should also be available on the CPUC's website.

⁵ Page 2, *Joint IOU Template*.

III. Conclusion

RCRC supports the Commission's efforts to establish a more consistent, transparent, and actionable Customer Reliability Report framework. Strengthening cause-code granularity, instituting a repetitive-outage indicator with required remediation plans, linking reliability outcomes to WMP/WMDR hardening activities, and improving customer notification reporting will significantly enhance transparency and accountability. At the same time, California cannot tolerate the current energy reliability struggles becoming the new status quo. The CPUC must ensure the substantial ratepayer-funded investments authorized for wildfire risk reduction also deliver tangible improvements in service reliability for customers.

RCRC appreciates your consideration of our comments and the recommendations contained herein.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Leigh Kammerich

Leigh Kammerich

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Dated: January 9, 2026



To: Members of the RCRC Board of Directors
From: ESJPA Chair, Supervisor Lori Parlin, El Dorado County
Staci Heaton, ESJPA Deputy Executive Director
Date: January 6, 2026
Re: Environmental Services Joint Powers Authority Update

Summary

The following is a summary of the Rural Counties' Environmental Services Joint Powers Authority's (ESJPA) recent activities. Highlights include the legislative and regulatory activities that impact RCRC member county solid waste departments.

ESJPA Board Meeting

The ESJPA's most recent Board of Directors meeting was held on December 11, 2025, where the Board received an extended report on CalRecycle activities and engaged in a lengthy discussion on expected and potential legislative action in 2026. The next ESJPA Board of Directors meeting will be held Thursday, March 26, 2026 at 9:00 a.m. The meeting will be held at the RCRC offices in Sacramento, CA with a limited number of remote locations. The ESJPA Board of Directors will be considering the approval of the updated 2026-2028 ESJPA Business Plan, which proposes several items for encouraging member participation and expanding ESJPA's advocacy outreach.

ESJPA Activities

ESJPA continues to actively participate and report to its members on various waste related topics as well as solid waste industry stakeholders. ESJPA continues to aid members with implementation of short-lived climate pollutant organics regulations (SB 1383) and mandatory commercial organics diversion and is informing and assisting members with new requirements imposed by electric vehicle mandates, hazardous waste regulations and various legislative and regulatory proposals. ESJPA continues to provide technical assistance to individual counties on a variety of issues and has assisted ESJPA members with regulatory compliance challenges to help provide guidance and assistance, as well as interfacing with state regulatory bodies on their behalf. The regulatory bodies ESJPA works with include CalRecycle, the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), the State Water Resources Control Board, and the California Air Resources Board (CARB).

CalRecycle Rural Zero Waste Plan

The ESJPA was awarded a contract in excess of \$300,000 by CalRecycle in June 2024 to develop the state's first Rural Zero Waste Plan. The Plan will examine the feasibility

and challenges of achieving zero waste in 19 low-population counties across California, all of which are RCRC member counties and 18 of which are ESJPA members. Work began on the contract in November 2024, but is currently in a long pause due to state internal funding complications at CalRecycle. The contract is part of ESJPA's ongoing effort to fulfill the goals of the ESJPA 2022-25 Business Plan, which includes pursuing innovative revenue streams to supplement ESJPA's work.

***California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle)
Senate Bill 54 Plastic Pollution Prevention and Packaging Producer Responsibility Act***

ESJPA is engaged in the development of the second set of regulations at CalRecycle to implement the provisions of Senate Bill 54 (Allen, 2022), after the original, final regulations were pulled back in early 2025 for reconsideration and amendments at the direction of Governor Gavin Newsom. The development of the second set of regulations at CalRecycle is ongoing, with RCRC and ESJPA providing extensive input to help ensure that local jurisdictions do not bear the costs or enforcement actions once the regulations are implemented. In addition, Scott Scholz, General Manager of Western Placer Waste Management Authority, represents rural jurisdictions on CalRecycle's SB 54 Plastic Pollution Prevention and Packaging Production Responsibility Act Advisory Board on recommendation of RCRC.

Illegal Dumping

ESJPA continues to work with member jurisdictions to solve issues related to the pervasive statewide illegal dumping problem. ESJPA consultant Larry Sweetser, Sweetser and Associates, serves as Chair of CalRecycle's Illegal Dumping Technical Advisory Committee on behalf of ESJPA. The IDTAC works to identify and develop ways to improve the ability of local and regional jurisdictions to respond to the illegal dumping problem.

California Air Resources Board (CARB)

CARB is currently considering amendments to its Landfill Methane Regulation (LMR) which would place stricter monitoring requirements on both open and closed landfills statewide. ESJPA has been actively engaged in advocacy on the LMR update, including participating in meetings with CARB Chair Lauren Sanchez and filing extensive recommendations on the proposal. CARB adopted the updates on November 20, 2025, which included and considered many of the recommendations offered by ESJPA.

Future Legislation

ESJPA continues to explore legislative options to address major waste management issues in its member counties. Proposals to address issues such as disposal of vape pens and single-use propane cylinders were unsuccessful in 2025, but will be addressed again in the 2026 legislative year.

Grant Update

Used Oil Payment Program

Work continues to improve the used oil program infrastructure in Alpine, Colusa, and Mariposa Counties. ESJPA has continued traveling to events in these counties to educate and assist residents with disposal of used oil.

Tire Amnesty Grant

The ESJPA continues to implement this grant for four ESJPA member counties (Colusa, Mariposa, Sierra, and Tuolumne) that are ongoing grant recipients through this program. The grant provides opportunities for residents to dispose of tires at free tire amnesty events.

Staff Recommendation

ESJPA will continue to follow development and engage in issues pertaining to solid waste and assist member counties with their concerns and issues.



To: Members of the RCRC Board of Directors
From: Mary-Ann Warmerdam, Senior Vice President Government Affairs
Date: January 13, 2026
Re: State and Federal Legislative Update

Summary

A verbal state and federal legislative update may be provided at the RCRC Board of Directors Meeting to provide a more contemporary overview and capture changes. This memo is current as of the date noted above.

State Legislative Update

The California State Legislature returned to Sacramento on January 5, 2026, convening the second year of the 2025-2026 session.

This year is expected to be dominated by a projected budget deficit, midterm elections, and a range of policy issues including indigent care, CEQA, forestry funding as well as how the State expends its cap-and-invest funds more broadly. RCRC will also continue to engage on vapes and other household and consumer hazardous waste issues; the conversation around general liability for local districts; and wildfire mitigation and air quality. RCRC staff is expecting this to be another “defensive” year and is continuing to work on our sponsored legislation and reviewing opportunities for initiating legislation where possible.

The Governor’s Proposed Budget was released on Friday, January 9, 2025. RCRC’s Government Affairs team compiled the [Rural Rundown](#), which provides highlights of the anticipated impacts on member counties.

This legislative year, as we continue pursuit of our objectives guided by the RCRC Strategic Plan and Policy Principles, the RCRC Government Affairs (GA) team will resume the “Government Affairs Call-In” sessions (previously known as “legislative call-in” sessions) beginning the on last Thursday of January and monthly while the legislature is in session. The call is open to any RCRC Board Delegate (and supervisorial colleagues), CAO’s, and senior county staff. The GA team uses the opportunity to share what we know and solicit feedback on various issues that are “in play” at that moment,

and to take questions about the items discussed. These informal calls last for one hour or less. More information will be sent out as the date of the first call draws near.

Finally, for those who may want to refresh their recollection of RCRC's advocacy on behalf of our member counties in 2025, there are two key resources available. First, the [RCRC 2025 Legislative Digest](#), released on November 7, 2025, provides an overview of significant bills representing these efforts. Second, the [2025 Rural Recap](#) is a report from the RCRC Government Affairs team, prepared for the RCRC Board of Directors, to highlight many of the significant advocacy efforts RCRC staff engaged in on behalf of its members and the members of California's rural communities. Available on RCRC's website in the Advocacy section, we encourage you to share both the 2025 Legislative Digest and the Rural Recap with your fellow supervisors and with the appropriate members of your county staff.

Federal Legislative Update

Congress returned the week of January 5th with a number of pressing issues on their docket. Recent foreign policy actions notwithstanding, three key areas of focus are expected to dominate the conversation around domestic concerns: Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26); healthcare; and natural resources.

Appropriations Update

As the January 30 funding deadline approaches, congressional leaders are working to advance additional FY26 appropriations after reaching an agreement on an overall spending topline in December. With only three FY26 spending bills enacted to date, House and Senate leaders recently finalized conference legislative text for a [three-bill FY26 “minibus”](#) covering Interior–Environment, Energy–Water, and Commerce–Justice–Science, which is expected to reach the House floor on Thursday, January 8, 2026 ([conferenced bill text | section-by-section](#)). The Interior bill's Section-by-Section can be found [here](#).

The current Interior–Environment text maintains strong funding levels for several RCRC priorities including \$3.27 billion for the National Park Service, \$6.13 billion for the U.S. Forest Service, as well as fully funding the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program. Additionally, the legislation provides \$8.8 billion for the EPA, nearly 4% below the current enacted level. This reduction is less drastic than the reduction requested by the Administration. As proposed, the text also fully funds wildfire preparedness and suppression at \$4.25 billion and includes funding for the permanent wildland firefighter pay fix and job series, preventing a significant pay reduction for the federal firefighting workforce. In addition, the bill provides \$1.65 billion for Bureau of Reclamation projects to support reliable water supplies and hydroelectric power across the western United States.

Beyond the three measures included in the minibus, six additional FY26 funding bills remain outstanding: Defense; Labor–HHS–Education; Transportation–HUD; Financial

Services-General Government; Homeland Security; and State-Foreign Operations. House Appropriations Chairman Tom Cole (R-OK) aims to move the two most controversial spending bills, the Defense and Labor-HHS-Education bills, following Martin Luther King Jr. Day, while the timeline for the other four remaining appropriations bills remains unclear. If lawmakers are unable to come to an agreement, Congress would likely need to rely on another continuing resolution to prevent a partial shutdown after January 30.

Healthcare Update

With the healthcare debate over ACA subsidies unresolved at the end of December, healthcare is poised to remain a top legislative priority in 2026. Amid this broader subsidy debate, several policy developments are emerging that will directly affect rural hospital funding.

Medicare Payment Parity

Following initial action by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), momentum is growing within the Administration and Congress to expand Medicare payment parity, or site-neutral payment reform. These reforms would standardize Medicare reimbursement regardless of whether services are provided in hospital outpatient departments or physician offices, eliminating higher hospital-specific payment rates. CMS has already finalized payment alignment for certain physician-administered drugs beginning in 2026 and has indicated that additional outpatient services could be addressed through future rulemakings. Congressional interest in codifying payment parity is also increasing, with Senator John Kennedy (R-LA) introducing legislation (S. 1629) to extend site-neutral payments to a broader set of services.

For rural hospitals, this reduced outpatient reimbursement—layered onto additional constraints on Medicaid financing under the *One Big Beautiful Bill Act*—could compound financial pressure and increase the risk of closure.

Rural Healthcare Transformation Fund

On December 29, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced Fiscal Year 2026 awards under the \$50 billion Rural Health Transformation Fund, including approximately \$233.6 million for California. While half of the program's funding is distributed evenly across states and fixed, Administration officials have indicated that the discretionary half of FY26 funding could be clawed back, and future discretionary allocations reduced, if states fail to advance healthcare policies promoted by the Administration. Officials have not specified which policy actions would trigger such adjustments, creating uncertainty around how compliance will be evaluated.

Natural Resources Update

Permitting Bills

Efforts to advance bipartisan permitting reform in Congress have significantly stalled following the Administration's decision to pause five offshore wind projects along the Atlantic Coast. The move prompted sharp backlash from Senate Democrats, particularly

Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) and Senator Martin Heinrich (D-NM), who said a permitting deal is impossible if the administration “refuses to follow the law” and undermines trust in the executive branch.

Their response marked a notable shift from earlier optimism, coming just days after the House passed the *Standardizing Permitting and Expediting Economic Development (SPEED) Act* ([H.R. 4776](#)), a bipartisan permitting bill with support from 11 Democrats. That House vote followed a GOP leadership deal with conservatives, allowing the Administration greater authority to delay projects already under construction, a provision Democrats say directly enabled the offshore wind pauses.

While Senate Republicans, including Senator Shelley Moore Capito and Senator Mike Lee, have continued to express interest in permitting reform, Democrats argue the Administration’s actions have eroded the trust needed to finalize a bipartisan agreement. Although negotiations technically continue, and both Republicans and Democrats have said that they would release draft proposals early this year, it is unclear whether a viable Senate deal will materialize.

Farm Bill

The House and Senate Agriculture Committees are expected to resume efforts to advance a five-year Farm Bill, an objective that has eluded them since the 2018 Farm Bill expired in 2023. In the interim, Congress has relied on a patchwork approach—extending some Farm Bill authorities through the *One Big Beautiful Bill* and providing a one-year extension for the remaining programs as part of the government reopening deal—while comprehensive updates to conservation, forestry, rural development, and the farm safety net remain unresolved.

Though neither committee has released a formal legislative timeline, House Agriculture Chair Glenn Thompson (R-PA) has expressed interest in marking up legislation early in the new year. On the Senate side, Agriculture Chair John Boozman (R-AR.) has emphasized that his office remains committed to advancing a Farm Bill. However, Chair Boozman has cautioned that revisiting reconciliation outcomes—particularly SNAP-related provisions—would not advance bipartisan negotiations.

That position adds to uncertainty surrounding the Farm Bill’s path forward, as some Democrats have indicated they remain unwilling to engage in negotiations absent changes to SNAP reforms enacted through reconciliation. More broadly, SNAP’s inclusion in reconciliation outside the traditional Farm Bill process has weakened the bipartisan coalition that has historically paired Democratic support for nutrition assistance with Republican support for commodity and conservation programs. As a result, the pathway forward for a Farm Bill remains unclear.

RCRC Remembers Congressman Doug LaMalfa

Following the sudden passing of Congressman Doug LaMalfa on Tuesday, January 6, 2026, RCRC issued the following [statement](#), signed by RCRC Chair, Supervisor Miles

Menetrey (Mariposa County) and RCRC Immediate Past-Chair, Supervisor Geri Byrne (Modoc County).

The RCRC family is deeply saddened by the passing of Congressman Doug LaMalfa. Serving California's 1st District from 2013 to 2026, Congressman LaMalfa was more than a representative; he was a dedicated partner and steadfast advocate for rural counties, ensuring that their most pressing concerns were addressed and championed at the highest levels of government.

Congressman LaMalfa fought tirelessly to ensure north state communities had the tools to thrive, from securing the future of the Sites Reservoir to ensuring that fire recovery settlements reached the hands of survivors. As Chairman of the Western Caucus, he was a powerful voice for local control, championing water rights, pushing for investment in water infrastructure, and advocating for forest management practices that remain vital to rural California's safety and prosperity.

Throughout his distinguished tenure, Congressman LaMalfa remained humble and approachable, always maintaining a close connection with his constituents. He was regularly present in the District, attending local FFA fundraisers, volunteer fire department events, and Farm Bureau meetings—never losing sight of the people he served.

Congressman LaMalfa's unwavering commitment to public service has left an enduring legacy in rural California. His dedication and integrity will be remembered for generations to come. Our deepest condolences go out to his family, friends, and the constituents he served so faithfully.

Staff Recommendation

Information only. RCRC staff continues to work on state and federal policy items that impact California's rural counties.

State Legislative Update

January 15, 2026

[**AB 28**](#)

(Schiavo D) Solid waste landfills: subsurface temperatures.

Last Amend: 9/3/2025

Status: 9/11/2025-Failed Deadline pursuant to Rule 61(a)(14). (Last location was INACTIVE FILE on 9/8/2025)(May be acted upon Jan 2026)

Summary: would require landfill operators to continuously monitor and disclose landfill gas temperatures and take corrective measures if gas temperatures exceed specified levels for certain periods of time. This measure would also impose substantial penalties for failure to notify, report, or post information online.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Oppose Unless		Solid Waste
Amended	John (1)	Management

[**AB 35**](#)

(Alvarez D) Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024: Administrative Procedure Act: exemption: program guidelines and selection criteria.

Last Amend: 1/14/2026

Status: 1/14/2026-Read second time and amended.

Summary: The Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024, approved by the voters as Proposition 4 at the November 5, 2024, statewide general election, authorized the issuance of bonds in the amount of \$10,000,000,000 pursuant to the State General Obligation Bond Law to finance projects for safe drinking water, drought, flood, and water resilience, wildfire and forest resilience, coastal resilience, extreme heat mitigation, biodiversity and nature-based climate solutions, climate-smart, sustainable, and resilient farms, ranches, and working lands, park creation and outdoor access, and clean air programs. Current law authorizes certain regulations needed to effectuate or implement programs of the act to be adopted as emergency regulations in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, as provided. Current law requires the emergency regulations to be filed with the Office of Administrative Law and requires the emergency regulations to remain in effect until repealed or amended by the adopting state agency. This bill, notwithstanding the above, would exempt the adoption of regulations needed to effectuate or implement programs of the act from the requirements of the Administrative Procedure Act, as provided. The bill would require a state entity that receives funding to administer a competitive grant program established using the Administrative Procedure Act exemption to do certain things, including develop draft project solicitation and evaluation guidelines and to submit those guidelines to the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency, except as provided. The bill would require the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency to post an electronic form of the guidelines submitted by a state entity and the subsequent verifications on the Natural Resources Agency's internet website.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Support	Staci (1)	Forest & Public Lands Stewardship, Water & Wildlife

[**AB 261**](#)

(Quirk-Silva D) Fire safety: fire hazard severity zones: State Fire Marshal.

Last Amend: 7/10/2025

Status: 8/29/2025-Failed Deadline pursuant to Rule 61(a)(11). (Last location was APPR. SUSPENSE FILE on 8/18/2025)(May be acted upon Jan 2026)

Summary: Current law requires the State Fire Marshal to classify lands within state responsibility areas into fire hazard severity zones, and, by regulation, designate fire hazard severity zones and assign to each zone a rating reflecting the degree of severity of fire hazard that is expected to prevail in the zone. Current law requires the State Fire Marshal to periodically review designated and rated zones and, as necessary, revise zones or their ratings or repeal the designation of zones. Current law also requires the State Fire Marshal to identify areas in the state that are not state responsibility areas as moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones based on consistent statewide criteria and based on the severity of fire hazard that is expected to prevail in those areas, and to periodically review and, as necessary, make recommendations relative to very high fire hazard severity zones. This bill would prohibit the State Fire Marshal's determination of fire hazard severity zone, in both state responsibility areas and lands that are not state responsibility areas, from being based on risk mitigation activities. The bill would, as applied to both state responsibility areas and lands that are not state responsibility areas, authorize the State Fire Marshal, in periods between the State Fire Marshal's review of areas of the state for recommendations regarding an area's fire hazard severity zone, to confer with entities, including, but not limited to, public agencies, tribes, nonprofit organizations, project applicants, and members of the

public, on actions that may impact the degree of fire hazard in an area or the area's recommended fire hazard severity zone designation. The bill would authorize the State Fire Marshal to provide a written response to an entity on actions that may impact the degree of fire hazard and would require this written response to be posted on the State Fire Marshal's internet website.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Support	Staci (2), Tracy (1)	Forest & Public Lands Stewardship

[**AB 340**](#)

(Ahrens D) Employer-employee relations: confidential communications.

Last Amend: 3/5/2025

Status: 8/29/2025-Failed Deadline pursuant to Rule 61(a)(11). (Last location was APPR. SUSPENSE FILE on 8/18/2025)(May be acted upon Jan 2026)

Summary: Current law that governs the labor relations of public employees and employers, including, among others, the Meyers-Milias-Brown Act, the Ralph C. Dills Act, provisions relating to public schools, and provisions relating to higher education, prohibits employers from taking certain actions relating to employee organization, including imposing or threatening to impose reprisals on employees, discriminating or threatening to discriminate against employees, or otherwise interfering with, restraining, or coercing employees because of their exercise of their guaranteed rights. Those provisions of current law further prohibit denying to employee organizations the rights guaranteed to them by current law. This bill would prohibit a public employer from questioning a public employee, a representative of a recognized employee organization, or an exclusive representative regarding communications made in confidence between an employee and an employee representative in connection with representation relating to any matter within the scope of the recognized employee organization's representation.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Oppose	Sarah (1)	County Operations

[**AB 442**](#)

(Hadwick R) Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act of 1973: working forest management plans: harvest area.

Last Amend: 4/21/2025

Status: 1/13/2026-From committee: Do pass and re-refer to Com. on APPR. (Ayes 13. Noes 0.) (January 12). Re-referred to Com. on APPR.

Summary: Under the Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act of 1973, the Legislature finds and declares the policy of the state to encourage prudent and responsible forest management of nonindustrial timberlands by approving working forest management plans in advance. Current law requires the harvest area of a working forest management plan to be contained within a single hydrological area, as defined. This bill would delete the requirement that the harvest area of a working forest management plan be contained within a single hydrological area.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Watch	John (1), Staci (2)	CEQA

[**AB 465**](#)

(Zbur D) Local public employees: memoranda of understanding.

Last Amend: 3/13/2025

Status: 5/23/2025-Failed Deadline pursuant to Rule 61(a)(5). (Last location was APPR. SUSPENSE FILE on 4/23/2025)(May be acted upon Jan 2026)

Summary: The Meyers-Milias-Brown Act authorizes local public employees, as defined, to form, join, and participate in the activities of employee organizations of their own choosing for the purpose of representation on matters of labor relations and defines various terms for these purposes. The act prohibits a public agency from, among other things, refusing or failing to meet and negotiate in good faith with a recognized employee organization. Current law states that the Legislature finds and declares that the duties and responsibilities of local agency employer representatives under the act are substantially similar to the duties and responsibilities required under existing collective bargaining enforcement procedures and therefore the costs incurred by the local agency employer representatives in performing those duties and responsibilities under that act are not reimbursable as state-mandated costs. This bill would require, on or after January 1, 2026, a memorandum of understanding between a public agency and a recognized employee organization to include specified provisions including, among other things, a provision providing for a system of progressive discipline that grants due process to an employee when they are disciplined, upon the request of the recognized employee organization. The bill would define "progressive discipline" and "due process" for this purpose.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Oppose	Sarah (1)	County Operations

AB 614**(Lee D) Claims against public entities.****Last Amend:** 3/27/2025**Status:** 5/23/2025-Failed Deadline pursuant to Rule 61(a)(5). (Last location was APPR. SUSPENSE FILE on 5/7/2025)(May be acted upon Jan 2026)

Summary: The Government Claims Act establishes the liability and immunity of a public entity for its acts or omissions that cause harm to persons and requires that a claim against a public entity relating to a cause of action for death or for injury to person, personal property, or growing crops be presented not later than 6 months after accrual of the cause of action. Under current law, claims relating to any other cause of action are required to be presented no later than one year after the accrual of the cause of action. This bill would remove the provisions requiring a claim against a public entity relating to a cause of action for death or for injury to person, personal property, or growing crops to be presented not later than 6 months after accrual of the cause of action and would instead require a claim relating to any cause of action to be presented not later than one year after accrual of the cause of action, unless otherwise specified by law.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Oppose	Sarah (1)	County Operations

AB 690**(Schultz D) Criminal procedure: indigent defense compensation.****Last Amend:** 5/23/2025**Status:** 8/29/2025-Failed Deadline pursuant to Rule 61(a)(11). (Last location was APPR. SUSPENSE FILE on 7/14/2025)(May be acted upon Jan 2026)

Summary: Current law grants a defendant the right to counsel in a noncapital case, and requires a defendant to be represented by counsel in a capital case. Current law requires specified assigned counsel to receive a reasonable sum for compensation and for necessary expenses, as determined by the court, to be paid out of the general fund of the county. This bill would, commencing with contracts for indigent defense services entered into after January 1, 2027, revise the process and require a county or court, when contracting for the provision or administration of indigent defense services, to include certain elements in the contract or other agreement for indigent services, including requirements for compliance with the Office of the State Public Defender's California Standards for Contract and Panel Defense Systems. The bill would specify that, in the absence of a contract for indigent defense services, an agreement for the services shall meet the Office of the State Public Defender's California Standards for Contract and Panel Defense Systems, as specified. The bill would prohibit a county or court from entering into flat fee contracts, as defined, or per case compensation contracts. The bill would require the structure of the contract for indigent defense services to ensure that attorneys have the resources and time necessary to provide competent legal representation. The bill would require counties that contract with a private entity or law firm to manage and provide indigent defense services to provide all those contracts to the Office of the State Public Defender every 2 years.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Oppose	Sarah (1)	Public Safety & Emergency Management

AB 748**(Harabedian D) Single-family and multifamily housing units: preapproved plans.****Last Amend:** 1/5/2026**Status:** 1/14/2026-From committee: Do pass and re-refer to Com. on L. GOV. (Ayes 11. Noes 0.) (January 14). Re-referred to Com. on L. GOV. From committee: Do pass and re-refer to Com. on APPR. (Ayes 8. Noes 0.) (January 14). Re-referred to Com. on APPR.

Summary: The Planning and Zoning Law provides for the adoption and administration of zoning laws, ordinances, rules and regulations by counties and cities and the implementation of those general plans as may be in effect in those counties or cities. In that regard, current law requires each local agency, by January 1, 2025, to develop a program for the preapproval of accessory dwelling unit plans. This bill would require each local agency, as defined, to develop a program for the preapproval of single-family and multifamily residential housing plans, whereby the local agency accepts single-family and multifamily plan submissions for preapproval and approves or denies the preapproval applications, as specified. The bill would require a large jurisdiction, as defined, to develop this program by July 1, 2027, and a small jurisdiction, as defined, to develop a program by January 1, 2029. The bill would require the local agency to post preapproved single-family or multifamily residential housing plans and the contact information of the applicant on the local agency's internet website. This bill would require a local agency to either approve or deny ministerially an application for a single-family or multifamily residential housing unit within 30 days if the lot meets certain conditions and the application utilizes specified plans that have been preapproved by the local agency or that are identical to a plan used in an application approved by the local agency.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Pending	Tracy (1)	Community & Economic Development

AB 762**(Irwin D) Disposable, battery-embedded vapor inhalation device: prohibition.****Last Amend:** 1/14/2026**Status:** 1/14/2026-Read second time and amended.

Summary: Would prohibit, beginning January 1, 2027, a person from importing or manufacturing for sale in this state a new or refurbished disposable, battery-embedded vapor inhalation device, and, beginning January 1, 2028, a person from selling, distributing, or offering for sale a new or refurbished disposable, battery-embedded vapor inhalation device in this state. The bill would define a “disposable, battery-embedded vapor inhalation device” to mean a vaporization device that is not designed or intended to be reused, as specified.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Support	John (1)	Solid Waste Management

AB 874**(Ávila Farías D) Mitigation Fee Act: development impact fees: qualified residential ownership and qualified rental projects.****Last Amend:** 1/5/2026**Status:** 1/13/2026-In committee: Set, first hearing. Hearing canceled at the request of author.

Summary: The Mitigation Fee Act imposes certain requirements on a local agency that imposes a fee as a condition of approval of a development project that is imposed to provide for an improvement to be constructed to serve the development project, or a fee for public improvements, as specified. The act also regulates fees for development projects and fees for specific purposes, including water and sewer connection fees, among others. The act, among other things, requires local agencies to comply with various conditions when imposing fees, extractions, or charges as a condition of approval of a proposed development or development project. The act prohibits a local agency that imposes fees or charges on a residential development for the construction of public improvements or facilities from requiring the payment of those fees or charges until the date of the final inspection or the date the certificate of occupancy is issued, whichever occurs first, except for utility service fees, as provided. This bill would require a local agency to provide a qualified residential rental project, as defined, with the option of either or both (1) development impact fees set at a rate of \$0 or (2) a development impact fee deferral agreement loan, subject to certain requirements.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Oppose	Tracy (1)	Community & Economic Development

AB 964**(Hadwick R) Commission on State Mandates: state mandates.****Last Amend:** 4/23/2025**Status:** 5/23/2025-Failed Deadline pursuant to Rule 61(a)(5). (Last location was APPR. SUSPENSE FILE on 5/14/2025)(May be acted upon Jan 2026)

Summary: Current law creates the Commission on State Mandates and establishes procedures for implementing the requirement in the California Constitution that the state reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Current law makes a reimbursement claim for actual costs filed by a local agency or school district subject to the initiation of an audit by the Controller, and authorizes the Controller to make a field review of a claim after it has been submitted but before it has been reimbursed. Current law requires the Controller to notify the claimant in writing within 30 days after issuance of a remittance advice of any adjustment to a claim for reimbursement that results from an audit or review. This bill would, instead, require the Controller to notify the claimant in writing within 30 days of any adjustment that results from an audit or review.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Support	Sarah (1)	County Operations

AB 1109**(Kalra D) Evidentiary privileges: union agent-represented worker privilege.****Status:** 8/29/2025-Failed Deadline pursuant to Rule 61(a)(11). (Last location was APPR. SUSPENSE FILE on 7/14/2025)(May be acted upon Jan 2026)

Summary: Current law governs the admissibility of evidence in court proceedings and generally provides a privilege as to communications made in the course of certain relations, including the attorney-client, physician-patient, and psychotherapist-patient relationship, as specified. Under current law, the right of any person to claim those evidentiary privileges is waived with respect to a communication protected by the privilege if any holder of the privilege, without coercion, has disclosed a significant part of the communication or has consented to a disclosure. This bill would establish a privilege between a union agent, as defined, and a represented employee or represented former employee to refuse to disclose any confidential communication between the employee or former employee and the union agent made while the union agent was acting in the union agent’s representative capacity, except as specified. The bill would permit a

represented employee or represented former employee to prevent another person from disclosing a privileged communication, except as specified.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Oppose	Sarah (1)	County Operations

[AB 1156](#)

(Wicks D) Solar-use easements: suspension of Williamson Act contracts: terms of easement: termination.

Last Amend: 9/9/2025

Status: 9/13/2025-Failed Deadline pursuant to Rule 61(a)(14). (Last location was INACTIVE FILE on 9/13/2025)(May be acted upon Jan 2026)

Summary: The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, otherwise known as the Williamson Act, authorizes a city or county to contract with a landowner to limit the use of agricultural land to agricultural use if the land is located in an agricultural preserve designated by the city or county, as specified. The act authorizes the parties to mutually agree to rescind the contract in order to simultaneously enter into a solar-use easement if approved by the Department of Conservation, as specified. Current law defines the term “solar-use easement” for these purposes to mean any right or interest acquired by a county, or city in a parcel or parcels determined to be eligible, as provided, where the deed or other instrument granting the right or interest imposes certain restrictions that effectively restrict the use of the land to photovoltaic solar facilities for the purpose of providing for the collection and distribution of solar energy and certain other incidental or subordinate uses or other alternative renewable energy facilities. This bill would revise the definition of the term “solar-use easement” to, among other changes, expand the authorized uses of the land under the easement to include solar energy storage and appurtenant renewable energy facilities.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Support	John (1)	Energy

[AB 1198](#)

(Haney D) Public works: prevailing wages.

Status: 5/23/2025-In committee: Hearing postponed by committee. (Set for hearing on 01/22/2026)

Summary: Current law requires that, except as specified, not less than the general prevailing rate of per diem wages, determined by the Director of Industrial Relations, be paid to workers employed on public works projects. Current law requires the body awarding a contract for a public work to obtain from the director the general prevailing rate of per diem wages for work of a similar character in the locality in which the public work is to be performed, and the general prevailing rate of per diem wages for holiday and overtime work, for each craft, classification, or type of worker needed to execute the contract. Under current law, if the director determines during any quarterly period that there has been a change in any prevailing rate of per diem wages in a locality, the director is required to make that change available to the awarding body and their determination is final. Under current law, that determination does not apply to public works contracts for which the notice to bidders has been published. This bill would instead state, commencing July 1, 2026, that if the director determines, within a semiannual period, that there is a change in any prevailing rate of per diem wages in a locality, that determination applies to any public works contract that is awarded or for which notice to bidders is published after July 1, 2026. The bill would authorize any contractor, awarding body, or specified representative affected by a change in rates on a particular contract to, within 20 days, file with the director a verified petition to review the determination of that rate, as specified.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Oppose	Sarah (1)	County Operations

[AB 1331](#)

(Elhawary D) Workplace surveillance.

Last Amend: 9/4/2025

Status: 9/13/2025-Failed Deadline pursuant to Rule 61(a)(14). (Last location was INACTIVE FILE on 9/13/2025)(May be acted upon Jan 2026)

Summary: Current law establishes the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement within the Department of Industrial Relations. Current law authorizes the division, which is headed by the Labor Commissioner, to enforce the Labor Code and all labor laws of the state the enforcement of which is not specifically vested in any other officer, board or commission. This bill would limit the use of workplace surveillance tools, as defined, by employers, including by prohibiting an employer from monitoring or surveilling workers in employee-only, employer-designated areas, as specified. The bill would provide workers with the right to leave behind workplace surveillance tools that are on their person or in their possession when entering certain employee-only areas and public bathrooms and during off-duty hours, as specified. The bill would prohibit a worker from removing or physically tampering with any component of a workplace surveillance tool that is part of or embedded in employer equipment or vehicles.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Oppose	Sarah (1)	County Operations

AB 1337**(Ward D) Information Practices Act of 1977.****Last Amend:** 5/23/2025**Status:** 7/17/2025-Failed Deadline pursuant to Rule 61(a)(10). (Last location was JUD. on 6/11/2025)(May be acted upon Jan 2026)**Summary:** Existing law, the Information Practices Act of 1977, prescribes a set of requirements, prohibitions, and remedies applicable to agencies, as defined, with regard to their collection, storage, and disclosure of personal information, as defined. Existing law exempts from the provisions of the act counties, cities, any city and county, school districts, municipal corporations, districts, political subdivisions, and other local public agencies, as specified. This bill would recast those provisions to, among other things, remove that exemption for local agencies, and would revise and expand the definition of “personal information.” The bill would make other technical, nonsubstantive, and conforming changes. Because the bill would expand the duties of local officials, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program. This bill contains other related provisions and other existing laws.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Oppose	Sarah (1)	County Operations

AB 1383**(McKinnor D) Public employees' retirement benefits.****Last Amend:** 4/11/2025**Status:** 5/23/2025-Coauthors revised. In committee: Hearing postponed by committee. (Set for hearing on 01/22/2026)**Summary:** Current law creates the Public Employees' Retirement Fund, which is continuously appropriated for purposes of the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS), including depositing employer and employee contributions. Under the California Constitution, assets of a public pension or retirement system are trust funds. The California Public Employees' Pension Reform Act of 2013 (PEPRA) establishes a variety of requirements and restrictions on public employers offering defined benefit pension plans. In this regard, PEPRA restricts the amount of compensation that may be applied for purposes of calculating a defined pension benefit for a new member, as defined, by restricting it to specified percentages of the contribution and benefit base under a specified federal law with respect to old age, survivors, and disability insurance benefits. This bill, on and after January 1, 2026, would require a retirement system to adjust pensionable compensation limits to be consistent with a defined benefit limitation established and annually adjusted under federal law with respect to tax exempt qualified trusts.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Oppose	Sarah (1)	County Operations

AB 1421**(Wilson D) Vehicles: Road Usage Charge Technical Advisory Committee.****Last Amend:** 1/5/2026**Status:** 1/13/2026-Coauthors revised. From committee: Do pass and re-refer to Com. on APPR. (Ayes 12. Noes 1.) (January 12). Re-referred to Com. on APPR.**Summary:** Current law requires the Chair of the California Transportation Commission to create a Road Usage Charge Technical Advisory Committee in consultation with the Secretary of Transportation to guide the development and evaluation of a pilot program assessing the potential for mileage-based revenue collection as an alternative to the gas tax system. Current law additionally requires the Transportation Agency, in consultation with the commission, to implement the pilot program, as specified. Current law repeals these provisions on January 1, 2027. This bill would require the commission, in consultation with the Transportation Agency, to consolidate and prepare research and recommendations related to a road user charge or a mileage-based fee system. The bill would require the commission to submit a report, as specified, on the research and recommendations described above to the appropriate policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature by no later than January 1, 2027.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Support In Concept	Eric (1)	Transportation

AB 1431**(Tangipa R) Personal income taxes: credit: medical services: rural areas.****Last Amend:** 4/28/2025**Status:** 5/5/2025-In committee: Set, second hearing. Held under submission.**Summary:** Would, for taxable years beginning on or after January 1, 2026, and before January 1, 2031, allow a credit against the taxes imposed by the Personal Income Tax Law to a qualified taxpayer in an amount equal to the qualified income earned by the qualified taxpayer for medical services, as defined, performed in a rural area in the state, not to exceed \$5,000 per taxable year, as specified.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Support	Sarah (1)	Health Care &

[SB 222](#)**(Wiener D) Residential heat pump systems: water heaters and HVAC: installations.****Last Amend:** 1/5/2026

Status: 1/14/2026-From committee: Do pass as amended and re-refer to Com. on APPR. (Ayes 4. Noes 1.) (January 14). **Summary:** Current law requires the State Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission, on or before January 1, 2019, in consultation with the Contractors State License Board, local building officials, and other stakeholders, to approve a plan that promotes compliance with specified regulations relating to building energy efficiency standards in the installation of central air-conditioning and heat pumps, as specified. Current law authorizes the commission to adopt regulations to increase compliance with permitting and inspection requirements for central air-conditioning and heat pumps, and associated sales and installations, consistent with the above-described plan. The bill would require a city, county, or city and county, beginning July 1, 2027, to adopt and offer asynchronous inspections for installations of residential heat pump water heater or heat pump HVAC systems, as defined, that do not require a licensed contractor and building inspector to be simultaneously present during the inspection. The bill would authorize a building inspector to contact the licensed contractor who performed the installation by telephone call or real-time video conferencing during their inspection, and, if the building inspector determines during an asynchronous inspection that there is an issue with an installation of the heat pump water heater or heat pump HVAC system and that the licensed contractor who performed the installation must be present to perform tests or cure the installation, to require the licensed contractor who performed the installation to schedule an additional inspection in which the building inspector and the licensed contractor who performed the installation are required to be simultaneously present during the additional inspection. The bill would specify that these provisions do not require a local entity described above to discontinue offering inspections for the installation of a residential heat pump water heater or heat pump HVAC system where in a building inspector and licensed contractor who performed the installation are simultaneously present. The bill would authorize a city, county, or city and county, on or before July 1, 2028, to issue up to one nondiscretionary permit per installation of a residential heat pump water heater or heat pump HVAC system in which the local entity administratively approves an application to install the residential heat pump water heater or heat pump HVAC system.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Oppose	Tracy (1)	Community & Economic Development

[SB 238](#)**(Smallwood-Cuevas D) Workplace surveillance tools.****Last Amend:** 5/1/2025

Status: 7/17/2025-Failed Deadline pursuant to Rule 61(a)(10). (Last location was P. & C.P. on 6/26/2025)(May be acted upon Jan 2026)

Summary: Would require an employer to annually provide a notice to the Department of Industrial Relations of all the workplace surveillance tools the employer is using in the workplace. The bill would require the notice to include, among other information, the personal information that will be collected from workers and consumers and whether they will have the option of opting out of the collection of personal information. The bill would require the department to make the notice publicly available on the department's internet website within 30 days of receiving the notice. The bill would define "employer" to include, among other entities, public employers, as specified.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Oppose	Sarah (1), Tracy (2)	County Operations

[SB 299](#)**(Cabaldon D) California Environmental Quality Act: exemption: day care center: family daycare home: zoning.****Last Amend:** 1/14/2026

Status: 1/14/2026-Read second time and amended. Re-referred to Com. on APPR.

Summary: The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires a lead agency to prepare a mitigated negative declaration for a project that may have a significant effect on the environment if revisions in the project would avoid or mitigate that effect and there is no substantial evidence that the project, as revised, would have a significant effect on the environment. Current law exempts specified projects from CEQA, including a project that consists exclusively of a day care center, as defined, that is not located in a residential area. This bill would exempt from CEQA a project that consists exclusively of a day care center or a family daycare home, as defined, that is located on a parcel of land zoned exclusively for residential use, except as provided. By imposing additional duties on a lead agency to determine the applicability of these exemptions, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Sponsor	John (1)	CEQA

[SB 430](#)

(Cabaldon D) Local agencies: automated decision systems.

Last Amend: 1/5/2026

Status: 1/8/2026-January 13 set for first hearing canceled at the request of author.

Summary: Current law establishes the Government Operations Agency (GovOps), and establishes within the agency the Department of Technology. Current law requires the Department of Technology to conduct, in coordination with other interagency bodies as it deems appropriate, a comprehensive inventory of all high-risk automated decision systems that have been proposed for use, development, or procurement by, or are being used, developed, or procured by, any state agency. Current law defines, for these purposes, an “automated decision system” as, among other things, a computational process that is used to assist or replace human discretionary decisionmaking and materially impacts natural persons. Current law authorizes local agencies, including cities and counties, to provide welfare, employment, and other public social services. Current law also authorizes the legislative body of any county or city, pursuant to specified procedures, to adopt ordinances that, among other things, regulate the use of buildings, structures, and land as between industry, business, residences, open space, and other purposes. This bill would impose certain restrictions on the use of an automated decision system by a local agency to confer supportive services, permits, or licenses, as specified. Among those restrictions, the bill would include a prohibition on using an output from the system as the sole basis for an adverse eligibility or benefit determination affecting a natural person, except as specified. The bill would require the local agency to verify the accuracy of the system’s outputs and to promote nondiscrimination in its use, as specified. The bill would require the local agency’s governing board to provide audits or other quality control review of the outputs, as specified, to assure acceptable accuracy.

Position

Lobbyist

Main Subject

Pending

Sarah (1)

County

Operations

[SB 445](#)

(Wiener D) High-speed rail: third-party agreements, permits, and approvals: regulations.

Last Amend: 7/17/2025

Status: 8/28/2025-Failed Deadline pursuant to Rule 61(a)(11). (Last location was APPR. SUSPENSE FILE on 8/20/2025)(May be acted upon Jan 2026)

Summary: Current law creates the High-Speed Rail Authority Office of the Inspector General (office) and authorizes the High-Speed Rail Authority Inspector General (inspector general) to initiate an audit or review regarding oversight related to delivery of the high-speed rail project undertaken by the authority and the selection and oversight of contractors related to that project. Current law requires the inspector general to submit annual reports to the Legislature and Governor regarding its findings. This bill would require the authority, on or before July 1, 2026, to develop and adopt internal rules, as defined, setting forth standards and timelines for the authority to engage utilities to ensure coordination and cooperation in relocating utility infrastructure or otherwise resolving utility conflicts affecting the delivery of the high-speed rail project. The bill would require the authority to ensure that the internal rules, among other things, identify the circumstances under which the authority would be required seek to enter into a cooperative agreement with a utility that, where relevant, identifies who is responsible for specific utility relocations, as specified.

Position

Lobbyist

Main Subject

Oppose

Eric (1)

Transportation

[SB 483](#)

(Stern D) Mental health diversion.

Last Amend: 7/9/2025

Status: 8/28/2025-Failed Deadline pursuant to Rule 61(a)(11). (Last location was APPR. SUSPENSE FILE on 8/20/2025)(May be acted upon Jan 2026)

Summary: Current law authorizes the court to grant pretrial diversion to a defendant diagnosed with a mental disorder if the defendant satisfies certain eligibility requirements and if the court determines that the defendant is suitable for diversion. Current law defines “pretrial diversion” as the postponement of prosecution to allow the defendant to undergo mental health treatment, subject to certain requirements, such as the court is satisfied that the recommended program will meet the specialized needs of the defendant, among others. Current law provides that a defendant is suitable for pretrial diversion if certain criteria are met, including that the defendant agrees to comply with the treatment as a condition of diversion and they will not pose an unreasonable risk of danger to public safety, among others. Current law defines “unreasonable risk of danger to public safety” as an unreasonable risk that the defendant will commit a new violent felony, as specified. This bill would additionally require that the defendant agree that the recommended treatment plan will meet their specialized needs and would redefine “pretrial diversion” to require that the court is also satisfied that the recommended program is consistent with the underlying purpose of mental health diversion, as described.

Position

Lobbyist

Main Subject

Removal of

Health Care &

Opposition

Sarah (1)

Social Services

[SB 501](#)

(Allen D) Responsible Battery Recycling Act of 2022: covered batteries.

Last Amend: 1/14/2026

Status: 1/14/2026-Read second time and amended. Re-referred to Com. on APPR.

Summary: The Responsible Battery Recycling Act of 2022 establishes a stewardship program, administered by the Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery, with the Department of Toxic Substances Control, as provided, for the collection, transportation, and recycling, and the safe and proper management, of covered batteries in the state in an economically efficient and practical manner. The battery recycling act defines a “covered battery” to mean a device consisting of one or more electrically connected electrochemical cells designed to receive, store, and deliver electric energy. Current law defines a “covered battery” to include a loose battery that is designed to be easily removed from a product by the user of the product with no more than common household tools. Current law excludes from the definition of a covered battery a primary battery weighing over 2 kilograms. Current law defines a “primary battery” for this purpose to mean a nonrechargeable battery, including, but not limited to, alkaline, carbon-zinc, and lithium metal batteries. Current law also excludes from the definition of a covered battery a rechargeable battery weighing over 5 kilograms and having a watt-hour rating of more than 300 watt-hours. This bill would revise the description of a loose battery, for purposes of the definition of a covered battery, by providing that a key, application, or other locking device provided to the consumer by the producer of the product or battery that is warranted by the producer of the product or battery to serve solely to prevent theft of the battery or tampering by persons other than the consumer and not to inhibit the consumer’s ability to remove, replace, or recycle the battery would not prevent a battery from being considered designed to be easily removed from a product by the user of the product with no more than common household tools. The bill would remove the exclusions from the definition of a covered battery for a primary battery and a rechargeable battery, described above. The bill would categorize all covered batteries as either a small format battery or a medium format battery.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Sponsor	John (1)	Solid Waste Management

[**SB 555**](#)

(Caballero D) Workers’ compensation: average annual earnings.

Last Amend: 4/1/2025

Status: 5/23/2025-Failed Deadline pursuant to Rule 61(a)(5). (Last location was APPR. SUSPENSE FILE on 5/5/2025)(May be acted upon Jan 2026)

Summary: Current law establishes a workers’ compensation system to compensate an employee for injuries sustained in the course of employment. Current law provides for temporary disability, permanent total disability, or permanent partial disability benefits, among other benefits, for an injured employee and requires the computation of an injured employee’s average annual earnings and average weekly earnings for purposes of determining those disability benefits. Current law requires, for computing average annual earnings for purposes of permanent partial disability indemnity, that average weekly earnings be taken at various amounts, including between \$240 and \$435 for injuries occurring on or after January 1, 2014, except as specified. This bill would additionally require that the above-described limits be adjusted by the amount equal to the cost of living adjustment for federal social security benefits for that year, as specified.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Oppose	Sarah (1)	County Operations

[**SB 601**](#)

(Allen D) Water: waste discharge.

Last Amend: 7/10/2025

Status: 8/28/2025-Failed Deadline pursuant to Rule 61(a)(11). (Last location was APPR. SUSPENSE FILE on 8/20/2025)(May be acted upon Jan 2026)

Summary: The State Water Resources Control Board and the 9 California regional water quality control boards regulate water quality and prescribe waste discharge requirements in accordance with the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act (act) and the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit program. Under the act, the State Water Resources Control Board is authorized to adopt water quality control plans for waters for which quality standards are required by the federal Clean Water Act, as specified, and that in the event of a conflict, those plans supersede regional water quality control plans for the same waters. This bill would authorize the state board to adopt water quality control plans for nexus waters, which the bill would define as all waters of the state that are not also navigable, except as specified. The bill would require any water quality standard that was submitted to, and approved by, or is awaiting approval by, the United States Environmental Protection Agency or the state board that applied to nexus waters as of May 24, 2023, to remain in effect, as provided.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Oppose	Eric (1), Staci (2)	Water & Wildlife

[**SB 632**](#)

(Arreguin D) Workers’ compensation: hospital employees.

Last Amend: 4/10/2025

Status: 7/17/2025-Failed Deadline pursuant to Rule 61(a)(10). (Last location was INS. on 6/16/2025)(May be acted upon Jan 2026)

Summary: Existing law establishes a workers' compensation system, administered by the Administrative Director of the Division of Workers' Compensation, to compensate an employee for injuries sustained in the course of employment. Existing law creates a rebuttable presumption that specified injuries sustained in the course of employment of a specified member of law enforcement or a specified first responder arose out of and in the course of employment. Prior existing law, until January 1, 2024, created a rebuttable presumption of injury for various employees, including an employee who works at a health facility, as defined, that included an illness or death resulting from COVID-19, if specified circumstances applied. This bill would define "injury," for a hospital employee who provides direct patient care in an acute care hospital, to include infectious diseases, cancer, musculoskeletal injuries, post-traumatic stress disorder, and respiratory diseases. The bill would include the 2019 novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) from SARS-CoV-2 and its variants, among other conditions, in the definitions of infectious and respiratory diseases. The bill would create rebuttable presumptions that these injuries that develop or manifest in a hospital employee who provides direct patient care in an acute care hospital arose out of and in the course of the employment. The bill would extend these presumptions for specified time periods after the hospital employee's termination of employment.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Oppose	Sarah (1)	County Operations

[**SB 758**](#)

(Umberg D) Public health: kratom and nitrous oxide.

Last Amend: 1/5/2026

Status: 1/14/2026-From committee: Do pass as amended and re-refer to Com. on APPR. (Ayes 5. Noes 0.) (January 13).

Summary: The Cigarette and Tobacco Products Licensing Act of 2003 requires a retailer, as defined, to hold a license from the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration to engage in the sale of cigarettes or tobacco products. This bill would expand those provisions to prohibit a retailer from selling nitrous oxide in any retail location.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Support	John (1), Sarah (2)	Health Care & Social Services

[**SB 769**](#)

(Caballero D) The Golden State Infrastructure Corporation Act.

Last Amend: 7/2/2025

Status: 9/4/2025-Ordered to inactive file on request of Assembly Member Aguiar-Curry.

Summary: The Bergeson-Peace Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank Act authorizes the California Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank, governed by a board of directors, to make loans, issue bonds, and provide other financial assistance for various types of infrastructure and economic development projects. Current law establishes the California Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank Fund, a continuously appropriated fund, to support the bank. This bill would enact the Golden State Infrastructure Corporation Act and would establish the Golden State Infrastructure Corporation, within the State Treasurer's Office, as a not-for-profit corporation for the purpose of administering the act and financing infrastructure projects. The bill would require the corporation to be governed by a board of directors, with a prescribed membership, and would require the business and affairs of the corporation to be managed by an executive director appointed by the Treasurer. This bill would prescribe the powers and duties of the corporation, including entering into financing transactions, borrowing money or issuing bonds, and setting and charging fees for obtaining financing from the corporation. Under the bill, the state would not in any way be liable for any obligation of the corporation, and the corporation would not be required to pay any taxes, except as provided.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Support	Eric (1)	Community & Economic Development

[**SB 828**](#)

(Cabaldon D) Fireworks licenses and permits: disqualifying conditions: storage facilities: local jurisdictions.

Last Amend: 1/5/2026

Status: 1/14/2026-From committee: Do pass and re-refer to Com. on APPR. (Ayes 7. Noes 0.) (January 14). Re-referred to Com. on APPR.

Summary: The State Fireworks Law requires the State Fire Marshal to adopt regulations relating to fireworks as may be necessary for the protection of life and property. Current law requires these regulations to include, among other things, provisions for the granting of licenses and permits for the manufacture, wholesale, import, export, and sale of all classes of fireworks. Current law authorizes the State Fire Marshal to deny or revoke a fireworks license for specified reasons. A violation of the State Fireworks Law or the regulations issued pursuant thereto is a misdemeanor. Current law requires fireworks licensees seeking authorization for specified activities related to fireworks to submit a written application for a permit to the chief of the fire department or the chief fire prevention officer of the city or county, or to another issuing authority that may be designated by the governing body of the city or county, or, in the event there is no officer or person appointed within the area, to the State Fire Marshal or the State Fire Marshal's deputy, as provided. This bill would require applicants for a wholesaler's license, a manufacturer's license, an importer's license, or an exporter's license to

disclose the complete street addresses of any intended storage facilities on their initial application. The bill would also require holders of those licenses to notify the Office of the State Fire Marshal and specified local entities of the complete street addresses of intended storage facilities for any fireworks or materials to build fireworks. By expanding the scope of a crime, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

Position	Lobbyist	Main Subject
Pending	Sarah (2), Tracy (1)	Community & Economic Development



To: Members of the RCRC Board of Directors
From: Eric Will, Policy Advocate
Date: January 6, 2026
Re: Water Issues Update

Summary

This memo provides an update on current issues involving California water policy. A separate legislative update will be given verbally during the Governmental Affairs portion of the RCRC Board of Directors meeting.

Issues

DWR Update

Initial State Water Project Allocation/Current Water/Snowpack Levels

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) announced an initial allocation of 10 percent of requested supplies for the State Water Project (SWP) on December 1, 2025. In comparison, DWR began the SWP initial allocation at 5 percent to start 2025 and increased to 50 percent by the end of the season.

DWR conducted the first snow survey of the season on December 30, 2025, indicating favorable conditions, given the series of atmospheric rivers at the end of the year and anticipated into the first part of January 2026. As of January 6, 2026, California's reservoirs are at 126 percent of average levels and statewide snowpack levels are at 36 percent of average peak snowpack.

State Water Resources Control Board Update

Bay-Delta Plan Comment Period

On December 12, 2025, State Water Board staff released for public review and comment a revised draft of updates to the Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Watershed (Bay-Delta Plan). The updates are focused on the portions of the plan relevant to the Sacramento River watershed, Delta eastside tributaries (including the Calaveras, Cosumnes, and Mokelumne Rivers), and Delta (Sacramento/Delta) for the reasonable protection of fish and wildlife beneficial uses. The State Water Board will receive public comments on the December 2025 revised draft updates to the Bay-Delta Plan at a public hearing scheduled for January 28-30, 2026, beginning at 9:00 am each day. Written comments are due on February 2, 2026.

CalWTRS Implementation/Deadline

The California Water Accounting, Tracking, and Reporting System (CalWATRS) launched in October 2025, replacing the legacy eWRIMS platform. The system is part of a larger Updating Water Rights Data (UPWARD) project through the Division of Water Rights, focusing on data modernization efforts. For the reporting period of October 1, 2024-September 30, 2025, all water right holders must submit reports electronically by January 31, 2026.

Federal Updates

Waters of the United States

On November 17, 2025, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of the Army signed a proposed rule to revise the definition of “waters of the United States” (WOTUS) under the Clean Water Act, implementing the Supreme Court’s decision in *Sackett v. EPA*. The key proposed changes would do the following:

- Remove “interstate waters” from the definition of WOTUS
- Add definitions for the following terms:
 - “Relatively Permanent”
 - “Tributary”
 - “Continuous Surface Connection”
- Modify exclusions of water treatment systems, prior converted cropland, and certain ditches and add an exclusion of groundwater from the definition of WOTUS

The proposed rule was open for a 45-day public comment period that closed on January 5, 2026. Updating the definition of WOTUS will continue to play out in Senate Bill 601 (Allen) over the course of 2026.

Potter Valley Hydroelectric Project

On December 19, 2025, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins filed a notice to intervene in the Potter Valley Hydroelectric Project proceedings currently being considered by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The Secretary’s comments urge FERC to reject PG&E’s current application to surrender its FERC license for Potter Valley. Staff will continue to monitor the proceedings as they continue. The full comments are available here: [USDA Potter Valley Comments Project No. 77.332](#).

Record of Decision – Long-Term Operation of the Central Valley Project & State Water Project

In December 2025, The Bureau of Reclamation signed a Record of Decision adopting an updated long-term operation plan for the Central Valley Project (CVP). Under the updated approach, the CVP may increase annual water deliveries by between 130 to 180 thousand acre-feet, and the SWP by 120 to 220 thousand acre-feet, depending on hydrologic conditions and subject to the State’s adoption of Action 5. This revised plan responds to [Executive Order 14181](#), issued on January 24, 2025, which amongst other things, directed the Secretary of the Interior to deliver more water via the CVP. The Record of Decision may be found here: [USBR Record of Decision Action 5](#).

End the California Water Crisis Package

On December 11, 2025, Representative Adam Gray (CA-13) introduced his End the California Water Crisis Package, three bills to stabilize water across the Central Valley, including the following:

- The Central Valley Water Solution Act, which would authorize 21 projects south of the Delta to increase regional water storage capacity
- The Water Agency and Transparency Enhancement Review (WATER) Act would codify certain provisions of Executive Order 14181 to create interagency oversight cooperation and lower permitting barriers for California water projects.
- The Build Now Act would create a one-year enforceable timeline for certain environmental reviews for any water project that would enhance Central Valley water storage expansion and place the burden of permitting delays on the federal government, rather than applicants.

More on the package may be found here: [End the California Water Crisis Package](#).

Miscellaneous

Over the past year, the University of Southern California ReWater Center, in partnership with the U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center and Director Daniel Druhora, have released a four-part docuseries on water in the United States, highlighting issues in water supply, rights, conservation, and innovation. The first three episodes are available at this link: [Documentary Series - Rewater Center](#).

Staff Recommendation

Information only. RCRC staff will continue to engage in these policy areas as necessary to ensure the concerns of RCRC member counties are addressed.



To: Members of the RCRC Board of Directors

From: Supervisor Miles Menetrey, Mariposa County, Recruitment and Retention Ad Hoc Committee Chair
(Staff: Sarah Dukett, Senior Policy Advocate)

Date: January 13, 2026

Re: Recruitment and Retention Ad Hoc Committee Update

Summary

This memo provides an update on the RCRC Public Sector Recruitment and Retention Advisory Committee.

Background

In March of 2025, the RCRC Board of Directors established the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on Public Sector Recruitment and Retention. The Ad Hoc focus is to explore the challenges around public sector recruitment and retention in rural areas to inform policy solutions, public sector workforce legislative, regulatory, and budget priorities, identify potential strategies for the next iteration of the RCRC Strategic Plan, review the labor, recruitment and retention policy principles for updates, and be a venue for related conversations with stakeholders, educators, State and Federal agencies and legislative representatives. The following Supervisors are on the ad hoc committee:

Supervisor Miles Menetrey, Mariposa County – Serving as Chair
Supervisor Jill Cox, Trinity County – Serving as Vice Chair
Supervisor Robert Poythress, Madera County
Supervisor Madeline Cline, Mendocino County
Supervisor Daron McDaniel, Merced County
Supervisor Mindy Sotelo, San Benito County
Supervisor Sheila Allen, Yolo County

Update

The RCRC Recruitment and Retention Ad Hoc Committee convened in August and November of 2025 to address ongoing challenges in rural county workforce recruitment and retention. After careful discussion, the committee decided to develop a countywide survey to provide a snapshot of current practices and state of recruitment, retention, benefits, and other human resources strategies. The data collected will serve several critical purposes:

- Inform the Ad Hoc Committee's recommendations for RCRC policy principles.
- Guide advocacy efforts on behalf of rural counties.
- Identify potential strategies for the next iteration of the RCRC Strategic Plan.

- Identify and prioritize the top needs in the recruitment and retention space for rural communities.

To ensure robust participation, we need the assistance of all Board Members. In February, an email will be sent to each county, addressed to the RCRC Board Member, Human Resources Director, and Chief Administrative Officer, requesting completion of the survey. Your engagement will be essential to encourage timely and thorough responses. Please be prepared to follow up with your county contacts to maximize survey participation. High response rates will strengthen the accuracy and impact of our findings.

Questions regarding the survey can be directed to Sarah Dukett, Senior Policy Advocate, and Travis Legault, Policy Analyst.

Staff Recommendation

Accept the informational update.



To: Members of the RCRC Board of Directors

From: Supervisor Bob Nelson, Santa Barbara County, Predatory Species Management Ad Hoc Committee Chair
(Staff: Staci Heaton, Senior Policy Advocate)

Date: January 7, 2026

Re: Predatory Species Management Ad Hoc Advisory Committee Update and Recommended Amendments to RCRC Policy Principles - **ACTION**

Summary

This memo provides an update on the activities of the RCRC Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on Predatory Species Management.

Background

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) have authority to list animal and plant species for special protections if they are scientifically shown to be dwindling in number. Among the listed species, gray wolves have grown in population in California and have become a danger to public safety in RCRC communities, as well as threatening livestock and factoring into diminishing deer, bighorn sheep, and elk populations. Similarly, mountain lions, which are under consideration for listing and thus protected, have experienced significant population growth and have become a threat to communities and prey animals native to California. Other species, such as black bears and coyotes, have been subject to policies and proposals that could limit the ability of hunters and others to help manage the species.

Given the increasing number of gray wolves in California, CDFW recently launched a program in several RCRC member counties to help inform their management of the species and the need for more aggressive deterrence tactics in and around communities and livestock. Gray wolves and mountain lions, both existing with special protections in parts of the state, have seen rapid population growth with few options for deterrence around communities where these animals pose a danger to residents.

CDFW has acknowledged that more aggressive management methods are needed to address the safety concerns posed by gray wolves. In October 2025, CDFW euthanized four gray wolves from the Beyem Sayo pack which were responsible for 70 livestock losses between March and September. The lethal taking was initiated after deterrence measures failed to halt the wolves' unprecedented attacks on cattle. The California Legislature has also seen numerous proposals to address predatory species, including measures to expand hunting practices for bears and mountain lions. Nationally, there is momentum behind the call for delisting the gray wolf based on the rising numbers and species recovery since they were

reintroduced. On December 19, 2025, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 845, the Pet and Livestock Protection Act, which is now being considered in the Senate.

Issue

As the new state legislative year approaches, members of the Committee have stressed the urgent nature of establishing policy to enable RCRC staff to actively engage in state and federal legislative and regulatory proposals that address the challenges posed by predatory species in RCRC member counties. At its December meeting, the Committee provided recommendations on additions to the RCRC Policy Principles for consideration by the full Board of Directors.

Committee Recommendation

The Committee requests that the RCRC Board of Directors adopt and approve the proposed amendments to the RCRC Wildlife Policy Principles.

Attachment

- Proposed Amended RCRC Wildlife Policy Principles



**RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES OF CALIFORNIA
2025-26 POLICY PRINCIPLES**

ADOPTED JANUARY 8, 2025

1215 K STREET, SUITE 1650
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814
(916) 447-4806

WATER AND WILDLIFE

WILDLIFE

Endangered Species Protection. RCRC supports efforts to streamline and modernize the state and federal Endangered Species Acts (ESAs), and the state's Fully Protected Species Act, as well as efforts to clarify and simplify the process to de-list species from a protected status. RCRC supports an ecosystem approach as opposed to a species driven approach, in order to help balance species protection with the economic and social consequences that may result from such protection, including compliance costs. RCRC supports increased public collaboration throughout the development of "reasonable and prudent" measures during the ESA consultation, the NEPA and the CEQA processes.

RCRC opposes efforts to broaden critical habitat designations through amendments to the ESA. RCRC also opposes a baseline approach to the economic analysis for critical habitat, and instead supports an approach that considers all fiscal impacts related to the listing and subsequent critical habitat designations for a species.

RCRC supports the state and federal de-listing of recovering species.

Invasive Species. RCRC supports state and federal funding to increase public awareness of invasive species as well as to facilitate their removal and reduce harmful economic and environmental impacts that result from the spread of these species.

Predatory Species Management. RCRC supports revisions to state law to lessen the economic impacts of predation by state-listed endangered species on livestock and native wildlife by authorizing full and prompt compensation from the state to individuals for animal depredation on private and public lands due to predation by state-protected species. With respect to compensation, RCRC supports:

- Permanent funding for predatory species compensation programs, such as the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Wolf-Livestock Compensation Program, that covers not only direct livestock loss but pay-for-presence as well. Deterrence should be funded as a separate program.
- Streamlining compensation programs to ensure livestock owners are paid for losses on private and public lands. Such programs should be evaluated annually to ensure that funding levels are commensurate with losses.
- Third party evaluation of losses to expedite the compensation process.
- The concept of allowing tax credits for livestock owners that experience direct and indirect losses.

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RCRC supports increased use of tracking tools such as collars by both CDFW and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), as well as tracking by local entities. Tracking should target a scientifically significant portion of the identified animals in

a species. RCRC supports use of these tools in concert with policies that provide transparency and communication with impacted communities and ranch operators. RCRC supports the use of real-time, constant tracking technology such as telemetry to track the locations of predatory species. RCRC supports state and federally sponsored training of livestock producers, county sheriffs or other individuals to perform DNA sampling that can identify problem predatory animals. Management practices should be based on the species' historic population numbers.

RCRC opposes translocation of predatory animals within the state of California.

RCRC supports coalition-building efforts with other organizations on like-minded policy actions. RCRC supports working with wildlife protection organizations to advocate for mutually beneficial outcomes for livestock, predatory species, and public safety.

RCRC supports the establishment of more robust methods of predatory species control, including the use of dogs to haze or hunt problem animals, where and when appropriate.

USDA/California County Cooperative Wildlife Services. RCRC supports legislation and regulatory actions that allow wildlife management tools and/or methods that have proven effective; collaborative efforts to fund and complete CEQA documentation for all Wildlife Services in California; and restoration of state matching funds for county participation in federal Cooperative Wildlife Services programs.

Wildlife Corridors. RCRC supports consideration of identified wildlife corridors in the development approval process to reduce the impacts of wildlife displacement. RCRC opposes identification of wildlife corridors that results in regulatory impacts on private landowners.

Wildlife Management. RCRC supports reform to give instant access to depredation reports for County Agricultural Commissioners. RCRC opposes requirements to submit Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests for information on predatory species depredations.

RCRC supports local, state, and federal wildlife management programs, as well as efforts by the County Agricultural Commissioners, to disseminate wildlife management educational information to the public.

RCRC supports federal and State funding for wildlife management programs and continued research on wildlife and predator management. RCRC supports state funding for the hiring and retention of wildlife officers to ensure that both game and non-game species are protected against poaching and highway traffic-related fatalities.



To: Members of the RCRC Board of Directors

From: Chair, Supervisor Miles Menetrey, Mariposa County
Mary-Ann Warmerdam, Senior Vice President Governmental Affairs
Eric Will, Policy Advocate

Date: January 14, 2026

Re: Establishment of Board of Directors Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on Sustainable Groundwater Management Act - **ACTION**

Summary

This memo provides an overview of the creation of an RCRC ad hoc advisory committee to review issues surrounding the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) in rural areas.

Background

Under Section 6.9 of the RCRC Bylaws and Corporations Code Section 7212, the RCRC Board of Directors may establish advisory committees. Such committees are formed solely to provide information and recommendations to the full RCRC Board of Directors and may not exercise any authority of the Board or act on behalf of RCRC. The Bylaws further provide that the RCRC Board of Directors will generally adhere to the requirements of the Ralph M. Brown (Open Meetings) Act (Brown Act). Under the Brown Act, an ad hoc committee composed solely of Directors that are less than a quorum of the Board may meet without complying with formal notice, agenda, and open meeting requirements. Consistent with the Bylaws and the Corporations Code, the RCRC Board Chair will propose appointments for the Chair, Vice Chair, and members of an advisory committee, subject to confirmation by the Board.

Issue

Passed in 2014, the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), developed a statewide framework for groundwater resources and is comprised from a three-bill legislative package, including AB 1739 (Dickinson), SB 1168 (Pavley), and SB 1319 (Pavley), and subsequent statewide regulations. SGMA requires local agencies in medium and high priority basins to form groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs), which in turn develop and implement Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs). SGMA requires intensive changes to land use, data reporting, and coordination at the local level to implement. The changes to local economies are significant, particularly in the agriculture sector.

The Ad Hoc will explore the challenges around SGMA implementation and potential policy changes that would support county efforts to implement and conduct mandated

requirements as part of SGMA. These efforts would assist in advocacy efforts in the 2027-2028 legislative session and beyond.

The ad hoc committee's Charge is proposed to read:

The Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (Committee) will share feedback to inform policy solutions, legislative, regulatory, and budget priorities, review the SGMA-related policy principles for updates, and be a venue for conversations with stakeholders, educators, State and Federal agencies and legislative representatives about SGMA. The Committee will focus on SGMA and related issues of groundwater availability and recharge, which may include larger questions of water policy where directly related to SGMA implementation.

The following Supervisors shall be appointed to serve on the ad hoc committee:

Supervisor Anne Cottrell, Napa County – Serving as Chair
Supervisor Daurice Smith, Colusa County
Supervisor Jen Roeser, Inyo County
Supervisor Doug Verboon, Kings County
Supervisor Madeline Cline, Mendocino County
Supervisor Daron McDaniel, Merced County
Supervisor Geri Byrne, Modoc County
Supervisor John Peschong, San Luis Obispo County
Supervisor Gary Bradford, Yuba County

Staff Recommendation

RCRC Chair, Supervisor Miles Menetrey of Mariposa County, and RCRC staff recommend that the RCRC Board of Directors approve the proposed Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.

Attachment

- Proposed Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on Sustainable Groundwater Management Act Charter



AD HOC ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT ACT

Committee Charge

The Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (Committee) will share feedback to inform policy solutions, legislative, regulatory, and budget priorities, review the SGMA-related policy principles for updates, and be a venue for conversations with stakeholders, educators, State and Federal agencies and legislative representatives about SGMA. The Committee will focus on SGMA and related issues of groundwater availability and recharge, which may include larger questions of water policy directly related to SGMA implementation.

Term

The Committee is expected to provide feedback that will inform RCRC's 2027 advocacy efforts, and complete its work at the conclusion of the 2026 calendar year.

Membership

The Committee will consist of the following members:

Supervisor Anne Cottrell, Napa County – Serving as Chair
Supervisor Geri Byrne, Modoc County – Serving as Vice Chair
Supervisor Daurice Smith, Colusa County
Supervisor Jen Roeser, Inyo County
Supervisor Doug Verboon, Kings County
Supervisor Madeline Cline, Mendocino County
Supervisor Daron McDaniel, Merced County
Supervisor John Peschong, San Luis Obispo County
Supervisor Gary Bradford, Yuba County



To: Members of the RCRC Board of Directors
From: Mary-Ann Warmerdam, Senior Vice President Governmental Affairs
Date: January 13, 2026
Re: Summary of RCRC Roundtable with Former Los Angeles Mayor/Assembly Speaker and Candidate for Governor Antonio Villaraigosa

Summary

On January 5th, 2026 we continued with our series of roundtables between the major candidates for governor and members of our board. Our aim is to foster candid conversations about important issues facing our counties and rural communities in our state as a whole.

For this roundtable, Supervisors Byrne, Nelson, Allen, and Bradford spoke with former Los Angeles Mayor and Assembly Speaker Antonio Villaraigosa for over an hour, along with RCRC President & CEO Patrick Blacklock and RCRC GA staff present to facilitate the conversation.

Issue

The conversation touched on a wide variety of topics, including energy, transportation, health care, and ways that rural counties have been innovative at meeting their needs within the limited budgets they have to work with. The conversation also touched on the work of GSFA, GSCA, and GSNR.

Former Mayor Villaraigosa talked about his desire to represent all Californians regardless of political affiliation, and to be clear eyed about tough decisions that need to be made to ensure the state can deliver services effectively in a constrained budget environment.

RCRC Staff have contacted the campaigns of major candidates from across the political spectrum about their availability to participate in future roundtables. Thus far, we have active interest from the Becerra, Bianco, Hilton, Steyer, and Swalwell campaigns.

Staff Recommendation

Information only item.