RCRC

Rural County Representatives of California

# Board of Directors Meeting

**Wednesday**
**August 19, 2026**
**8:00 A.M.**

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

# Rural County Representatives of California
# Board of Directors Meeting
# August 19, 2026 – 8:00 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/86716772763
Enter Password: 981011

2. Call-in and listen to the meeting:
Dial +1 (669) 444-9171
Enter meeting ID: 867 1677 2763
Enter password: 981011

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

| Breakfast Session |
|---|
| **Stewart Knox**<br>**Secretary**<br>**California Labor & Workforce Development Agency** |
| **8:00 a.m.** |
| **Page 1** |

**9:00 a.m.**

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. **June 5, 2026 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes** **Page 3**
    b. **RCRC Strategic Plan Mid-Year Update** **Page 9**
    *Carolyn Jhajj, Communications Director*
    c. **Proposed 2027 Meeting Calendar** **Page 23**
    *Maggie Chui, Director of Board Operations*
    d. **Forest Management and Wildfire Update** **Page 27**
    *Staci Heaton, Senior Policy Advocate*
    e. **Water Issues Update** **Page 43**
    *Eric Will, Policy Advocate*
    f. **RCRC Revised Pay Rate Schedule – Effective July 1, 2026** **Page 45**
    *Milena De Melo, Finance Director*
    g. **Proposed 2026 RCRC Revised Operating Budget** **Page 51**
    *Milena De Melo*

5. **RCRC Chair's Report**
*Chair, Supervisor Miles Menetrey, Mariposa County*

6. **President's Report**
*Patrick Blacklock, President and CEO*

7. **Governmental Affairs** *(Discussion and possible action relative to)*
    a. **Legislative Matters** *(Discussion and possible action relative to)*
    *First Deputy Chair, Supervisor John Peschong, San Luis Obispo County*
    *Second Deputy Chair, Lee Adams, Sierra County*
        i. **Proposition 43: Local Taxes: Limitations – ACTION** **Page 55**
        *Sarah Dukett, Senior Policy Advocate*
        ii. **Proposition 45: Building an Affordable California Act – ACTION** **Page 75**
        *John Kennedy, Senior Policy Advocate*
        iii. **Proposition 1: Housing Affordability Bond – ACTION** **Page 131**
        *Tracy Rhine, Senior Policy Advocate*
        iv. **November 2026 Statewide Ballot Propositions Overview** **Page 155**
        *Mary-Ann Warmerdam*
        v. **State and Federal Legislative Update** **Page 159**
        *Mary-Ann Warmerdam, Senior Vice President Governmental Affairs*
        vi. **Other Legislative Issues**
        *Governmental Affairs Staff*

b. **Regulatory Matters** *(Discussion and possible action relative to)*
*First Deputy Chair, Supervisor Rhonda Duggan, Mono County*
*Second Deputy Chair, Supervisor Monica Rossman, Glenn County*
   i. **California Public Utilities Commission Update** **Page 201**
   *Leigh Kammerich, Senior Policy Advocate*
   *John Kennedy*
   *Tracy Rhine*
   ii. **Other Regulatory Issues**
   *Governmental Affairs Staff*

c. **Other Governmental Affairs Matters** *(Discussion and possible action relative to)*
   i. **Report and Update Regarding the Following RCRC Ad Hoc Committees** **Page 257**
      1. **Predatory Species Management Ad Hoc Committee**
      *First Vice Chair, Supervisor Bob Nelson, Santa Barbara County, Ad Hoc Chair*
      *Supervisor Michael Kobseff, Siskiyou County, Ad Hoc Vice Chair*
      2. **Recruitment and Retention Ad Hoc Committee**
      *Chair, Supervisor Miles Menetrey, Mariposa County, Ad Hoc Chair*
      *Supervisor Jill Cox, Trinity County, Ad Hoc Vice Chair*
      3. **Sustainable Groundwater Management Act Ad Hoc Committee**
      *Second Vice Chair, Supervisor Anne Cottrell, Napa County, Ad Hoc Chair*
      *Supervisor Daurice Smith, Colusa County, Ad Hoc Vice Chair*

8. **Business and Administrative Matters** (*Discussion and possible action relative to*)
   a. **Rural County Photo Contest – ACTION** **Page 259**
   *Christopher Egan, Management Analyst*
   b. **2026 Annual Meeting Overview** **Page 267**
   *Dorothy Poole, Governmental Affairs Operations Manager*
   *Lorraine Cummings, Client Relations Representative*

9. **Member County Comments and Reports**

10. **RCRC Closed Session**
**Closed Session: Existing Litigation – Conference with Legal Counsel regarding litigation that has been formally initiated, pursuant to Government Code section 54956.9 subdivision (d)(1). The names of the cases are:**
   a. **Pacific Bell Telephone Company d/b/a AT&T California v. Reynolds, et al., United States District Court, Southern District of California Case No. 3:26-cv-03148-LL-JAC.**
   b. **In Re: MCP No. 204; Federal Communications Commission, Reducing Barriers to Network Improvements and Service Changes; Accelerating Network Modernization, United States Court of Appeals, Sixth Circuit Case No. 26-3375**
   *Arthur J. Wylene, General Counsel*

11. **Report of any Actions taken under Item 10 pursuant to Section 54957.1 of the Government Code**
*Chair, Supervisor Miles Menetrey, Mariposa County*

12. **Announcements**
   a. **August 20, 2026 - ESJPA Board Meeting, Sacramento**
   b. **August 20, 2026 - CSAC Executive Committee Meeting, Sacramento**

c. **September 17, 2026 - CSAC Board of Directors Meeting, Sacramento**
d. **September 23-25, 2026 - RCRC Annual Meeting, Santa Barbara County**
e. **September 25, 2026 - RCRC, GSFA & GSCA Board Meetings, Santa Barbara County**

## 13. Adjournment

Meeting facilities are accessible to persons with disabilities. By request, alternative agenda document formats are available to persons with disabilities. To arrange an alternative agenda document format or to arrange aid or services to modify or accommodate persons with a disability to participate in a public meeting, please call (916) 447-4806 at least 48 hours before the meeting.

Agenda items will be taken as close as possible to the schedule indicated. Any member of the general public may comment on agenda items during the public comment period. To facilitate public comment, please let staff know if you would like to speak on an agenda item. The agenda for this meeting of the Board of Directors of Rural County Representatives of California was duly posted at its offices, 1215 K Street, Suite 1650, Sacramento, California, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting.

Any written materials related to an open session item on this agenda that are submitted less than 24 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)

| | |
|---|---|
| Humboldt County<br>Board of Supervisors Office<br>825 5th Street, Room 111<br>Eureka, CA 95501 | |

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
## RCRC BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

***August 19, 2026 – 8:00 a.m.***

### Consent Agenda – ACTION

The RCRC Board of Directors will consider the following items:

a. June 5, 2026 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
b. RCRC Strategic Plan Mid-Year Update
c. Proposed 2027 Meeting Calendar
d. Forest Management and Wildfire Update
e. Water Issues Update
f. RCRC Revised Pay Rate Schedule – Effective July 1, 2026
g. Proposed 2026 RCRC Revised Operating Budget

- Maggie Chui
  Director of Board Operations
  (mchui@rcrcnet.org)
- Carolyn Jhajj
  Communications Director
  (cjhajj@rcrcnet.org)
- Staci Heaton
  Senior Policy Advocate
  (sheaton@rcrcnet.org)
- Eric Will
  Policy Advocate
  (ewill@rcrcnet.org)
- Milena De Melo
  Finance Director
  (mdemelo@rcrcnet.org)

## GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

### Proposition 43: Local Taxes: Limitations – ACTION

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

MEMO

This memo provides a summary of Proposition 43, the Local Taxes: Limitations Initiative.

RCRC staff is recommending that the RCRC Board of Directors consider taking a position on Proposition 43.

### Proposition 45: Building an Affordable California Act - ACTION

This memo provides a summary of Proposition 45, the Building an Affordable California Act.

RCRC staff is recommending that the RCRC Board of Directors adopt a "Oppose" position.

- John Kennedy
  Senior Policy Advocate
  (jkennedy@rcrncet.org)

MEMO

## Proposition 1: Housing Affordability Bond - ACTION

- Tracy Rhine
  Senior Policy Advocate
  (trhine@rcrcnet.org)

MEMO

This memo provides a summary of Proposition 1, the Housing Affordability Bond.

RCRC staff is recommending that the RCRC Board of Directors adopt a "No Position" position.

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## November 2026 Statewide Ballot Propositions Overview

This item provides an overview of 14 statewide ballot propositions scheduled for November 2026.

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

MEMO

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## State & Federal Legislative Update

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

MEMO

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

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## 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

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## Report and Update Regarding the Following RCRC Ad Hoc Committees

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

MEMO

This item provides updates on the Predatory Species Management Ad Hoc Committee, Recruitment and Retention Ad Hoc Committee, and Sustainable Groundwater Management Act Ad Hoc Committee.

# BUSINESS AND ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

**Rural County Photo Contest - ACTION**

This item addresses RCRC's 10th Annual Rural County Photo Contest.

The RCRC Board of Directors will cast their votes on the three finalist photographs to select the winner.

- Christopher Egan
  Management Analyst
  (cegan@rcrcnet.org)

MEMO

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**2026 Annual Meeting Overview**

- Dorothy Poole
  Governmental Affairs Operations Manager
  (dpoole@rcrcnet.org)

MEMO

This item provides an overview of the 2026 RCRC Annual Meeting, scheduled for September 23-25, 2026 in Santa Barbara County at the Hilton Santa Barbara Beachfront Resort. Register here.

# CLOSED SESSION

Closed Session: Existing Litigation – Conference with Legal Counsel regarding litigation that has been formally initiated, pursuant to Government Code section 54956.9 subdivision (d)(1). The names of the cases are:

a. Pacific Bell Telephone Company d/b/a AT&T California v. Reynolds, et al., United States District Court, Southern District of California Case No. 3:26-cv-03148-LL-JAC.
b. In Re: MCP No. 204; Federal Communications Commission, Reducing Barriers to Network Improvements and Service Changes; Accelerating Network Modernization, United States Court of Appeals, Sixth Circuit Case No. 26-3375

**Stewart Knox**
Secretary
California Labor & Workforce Development Agency

Stewart Knox was appointed Secretary of the California Labor & Workforce Development Agency in December 2022. He brings 28 years of statewide experience in workforce and economic development.

Before his appointment, Knox was Undersecretary of the Labor & Workforce Development Agency since 2021 and previously served in this role from 2019 to 2020. He served as Senior Vice President of Calbright Community College from 2020-2021, Executive Director of the California Employment Training Panel from 2014 to 2019, Director of Health and Human Services for Nevada County in 2014 and Director of Economic and Workforce Development for San Mateo County from 2013 to 2014. Secretary Knox was Director of the Northern Rural Training and Employment Consortium from 2009 to 2013 and Executive Director of the North Central Counties Consortium from 2006 to 2008. He was Director of Workforce for the City of Glendale from 2004 to 2006 and for Yuba Community College from 1997 to 2004.

Secretary Knox has been instrumental in transitioning several workforce development entities into productive, performance-based, and accountable organizations. With his broad multi-functional experience base in a large matrix of managed organizations, Secretary Knox has extensive knowledge of the complex interactions between workforce and economic development. His extensive leadership experience and knowledge of organization development concepts and theories provide him a solid foundation to assess and manage complex organizational issues such as strategic planning, team dynamics, and conflict management.

Secretary Knox is a native of Vina, California and earned a bachelor's degree from Chico State.

https://www.labor.ca.gov/about/secretary/

# Consent Agenda

**Rural County Representatives of California**
**Board of Directors Meeting**
**June 5, 2026 - 8:30 a.m.**
**Tenaya Lodge at Yosemite**
**1122 Highway 41**
**Fish Camp, CA 93623**

## MINUTES

### Call to Order, Determination of Quorum and Self Introductions

Chair, Supervisor Miles Menetrey, Mariposa County, presided. Present were President and CEO Patrick Blacklock, General Counsel Arthur J. Wylene, and Director of Board Operations, Maggie Chui, clerk. Chair Menetrey called the meeting to order at 8:59 a.m. A quorum was determined at that time. Those members present:

| Supervisor | County |
|---|---|
| David Griffith | Alpine |
| 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 |
| Rusty Robinson | Kings |
| Aaron Albaugh | Lassen |
| Robert Poythress | Madera |
| Miles Menetrey | Mariposa |
| Madeline Cline | Mendocino |
| Daron McDaniel | Merced |
| Geri Byrne | Modoc |
| Rhonda Duggan | Mono |
| Chris Lopez | Monterey |
| Sue Hoek | Nevada |
| Shanti Landon | Placer |
| Kevin Goss | Plumas |
| Mindy Sotelo | San Benito |
| John Peschong | San Luis Obispo |
| Bob Nelson | Santa Barbara |
| Chris Kelstrom | Shasta |
| Lee Adams | Sierra |
| Nancy Ogren | Siskiyou |
| Jeff Stephens | Sutter |
| Matt Hansen | Tehama |
| Jill Cox | Trinity |

| | |
|---|---|
| Dennis Townsend | Tulare |
| Mike Holland | Tuolumne |
| Gary Bradford | Yuba |

**<u>Absent</u>**

| | |
|---|---|
| Brian Oneto | Amador |
| Ryan Kelley | Imperial |
| EJ Crandell | Lake |
| Anne Cottrell | Napa |
| Mitch Mashburn | Solano |
| James Gore | Sonoma |
| Shiela Allen | Yolo |

**Public Comment**
None

**Consent Agenda**

a. **March 25, 2026 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes**
b. **Approval of Audited Financial Statements – December 31, 2025**
c. **California Public Utilities Commission Update**
d. **Rural County Photo Contest**

Chair, Supervisor Miles Menetrey, Mariposa County, called for approval of the above-listed consent agenda items.

> **Supervisor Rhonda Duggan, Mono County, motioned to approve the consent agenda items. Supervisor Madeline Cline, Mendocino County, seconded the motion. Motion passed with all Supervisors present voting "Aye."**

**RCRC Chair's Report**
Chair, Supervisor Miles Menetrey, Mariposa County, welcomed supervisors to the June RCRC Board of Directors meeting in Mariposa County, and expressed his appreciation to the supervisors and RCRC staff for visiting his community.

Supervisor Menetrey shared updates on the RCRC Officers' attendance at the National Association of Counties' Western Interstate Region Conference, the California State Association of Counties' Legislative Conference, and the work of the RCRC-affiliated Rural Advancement Institute. Supervisor Menetrey also highlighted the Mariposa County visit by California State Treasurer Fiona Ma, which included a productive discussion related to hospital retrofit concerns.

**President's Report**
Patrick Blacklock, President and CEO, provided a 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. Current initiative updates were provided on efforts related to the Regional Behavioral Health Advisory Committee grant, National Homeownership Month, the

indigent care proposal, the Rural Advancement Institute Advisory Council kickoff, the Golden State Natural Resources transportation project, the California Wildfire & Forest Resilience Task Force meeting, the RCRC photo contest, and the release of branded clothing.

**Member County Comments and Reports**

Chair, Supervisor Miles Menetrey, Mariposa 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 David Griffith, Alpine County, shared that Alpine County and the Western Rivers Conservancy had been awarded funding to acquire and preserve a ranch property near Markleeville. Supervisor Griffith also discussed recent wildlife activity and related community concerns.
- Supervisor Lori Parlin, El Dorado County, raised concerns regarding the California Chamber of Commerce's proposed ballot initiative on the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), noting that it could significantly impact local control.
- Supervisor Jen Roeser, Inyo County, provided an update on Inyo County's efforts to update its General Plan and requested input from fellow supervisors regarding the process.
- Supervisor Rusty Robinson, Kings County, discussed a recent Kings County election recall matter and the potential precedent it may establish.
- Supervisor Monica Rossman, Glenn County, spoke on an upcoming senior expo focused on supporting seniors and veterans in Glenn County.
- Supervisor Nancy Ogren, Siskiyou County, announced Siskiyou County's upcoming county fair.
- Supervisor John Peschong, San Luis Obispo County, announced San Luis Obispo County’s upcoming county fair and scheduled entertainment.
- Supervisor Rhonda Duggan, Mono County, provided an update on local fuel reduction efforts, including biomass utilization opportunities, green waste management, and a proposed geothermal project. Supervisor Duggan also raised concerns regarding a proposed mining project near a recreational area in Mono County.
- Supervisor Geri Byrne, Modoc County, spoke on efforts to construct fencing at the Modoc County airport, and discussed ongoing challenges related to the Tule Lake Segregation Center site, including recent actions by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.
- Supervisor Rex Bohn, Humboldt County, shared concerns regarding a recent animal rescue situation and encouraged counties to ensure that animal rescue facilities are properly inspected.
- Supervisor Madeline Cline, Mendocino County, provided an update on the Potter Valley Project, including recent federal interest in maintaining project infrastructure and ongoing discussions regarding water rights and project operations. Supervisor

Cline also noted a productive conversation with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife Director Meghan Hertel, as well as thanked Supervisor Menetrey for hosting the County of the Chair event.

- Supervisor Sue Hoek, Nevada County, thanked RCRC staff for providing a presentation to the Nevada County Board of Supervisors. Supervisor Hoek also provided updates on the County's housing assistance program, behavioral health facility project, youth workforce initiatives, and efforts to construct tiny homes utilizing locally sourced timber.
- Supervisor Bill Connelly, Butte County, shared information regarding a publicly accessible repository of Oroville Dam-related documents and resources.
- Supervisor Daurice Smith, Colusa County, provided an update on the Sites Reservoir project, noting that recently released documents differed from prior proposals and expressed support for returning to the original framework. Supervisor Smith also thanked Supervisor Menetrey for hosting the County of the Chair event.
- Supervisor Jeff Stephens, Sutter County, spoke on the Cap-to-Cap event, including discussions with the United States Department of Agriculture regarding available funding opportunities for rural infrastructure projects. Supervisor Stephens also thanked Supervisor Menetrey for hosting the County of the Chair event.
- Supervisor Darrin Short, Del Norte County, requested assistance from fellow supervisors regarding an energy-related issue. Supervisor Short also thanked Supervisor Menetrey for hosting the County of the Chair event.
- Supervisors Lee Adams, Sierra County; Bob Nelson, Santa Barbara County; Jill Cox, Trinity County; and Gary Bradford, Yuba County, thanked Supervisor Menetrey and RCRC staff for their efforts in organizing the County of the Chair event in Mariposa County.

**President/CEO Annual Compensation**
Chair, Supervisor Miles Menetrey, Mariposa County, and members of the RCRC Officers addressed the RCRC Board of Directors on how the RCRC Executive Committee reached the decision to approve the RCRC President and CEO Patrick Blacklock’s annual compensation. At meetings held in February and April, the RCRC Executive Committee completed the annual performance evaluation and compensation review.

Arthur J. Wylene, General Counsel, orally reported the recommendation for final action on Mr. Blacklock's compensation.

**Recommendation**
It was recommended that the Board of Directors approve the following as just and reasonable:

- A 3% increase in the President/CEO’s annual salary, to $453,645, effective June 27, 2026;
- A further 3% increase, to $467,254, effective on the first day of the last pay period in June 2027;

- A further 3% increase, to $481,272, effective on the first day of the last pay period in June 2028; and,
- A one-time performance incentive for the President & CEO in the amount of $35,000, to be included on the July 15, 2026 payroll.

  **Supervisor Lee Adams, Sierra County, motioned to approve the recommendations on the President/CEO Annual Compensation. Supervisor Sue Hoek, Nevada County, seconded the motion. Motion passed with all Supervisors present voting "Aye."**

**RCRC Long-Term Office Space Needs Discussion**
Patrick Blacklock and Arthur J. Wylene discussed RCRC's long-term office space needs, including options related to a potential lease extension and potential property acquisition opportunities. The RCRC Board of Directors provided feedback regarding organizational needs and considerations as staff continues to evaluate future office space options.

**Informational Presentation Regarding RCRC State Mandate Reimbursement Claims Program**
Patrick Blacklock provided an update on RCRC's ongoing efforts related to state mandate reimbursements. This included county-specific reimbursement reports and a proposed master contract, led by RCRC affiliate Golden State Finance Authority, to support participating member counties with reimbursement claims. The RCRC Board of Directors discussed the reimbursement report and proposal at length, including the opportunities it could provide for rural counties.

**2026 Annual Meeting Overview**
Dorothy Poole, Governmental Affairs Operations Manager, provided an overview of the RCRC 2026 Annual Meeting, scheduled to occur September 23-25, 2026, in Santa Barbara County at the Hilton Santa Barbara Beachfront Resort. Ms. Poole highlighted the processes for registration, the county basket drawing and auction, and sponsorship opportunities.

**State and Federal Legislative Update**
Senior Policy Advocates Tracy Rhine, John Kennedy, and Sarah Dukett provided an update on key state and federal legislative and regulatory developments affecting California's rural counties. The discussion included ongoing budget negotiations, trailer bill activity, Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund investments, impact mitigation fee proposals, H.R. 1, the Distressed Hospital Loan Program, behavioral health funding proposals, and Proposition 36 implementation.

Mr. Kennedy and Ms. Dukett also provided updates on legislation and policy issues within their respective portfolios, including wildfire liability, beverage container recycling, battery recycling and safety, household hazardous waste, vaping products, CEQA implementation, tribal consultation, artificial intelligence, autonomous systems, labor policy, and tort reform.

**RCRC Closed Session: Initiation of Litigation – Conference with Legal Counsel pursuant to Government Code section 54956.9 subdivision (d)(4). Two cases.**
The RCRC Executive Committee convened the closed sessions at 10:49 a.m. per Sections 54956.9(d)(4) of the Government Code.

The RCRC Executive Committee reconvened into open session at 11:39 a.m.

**Report any Actions Taken Under Item 10 Pursuant to Section 54957.1 of the Government Code**
RCRC Chair Supervisor Miles Menetrey, Mariposa County, deferred to Arthur J. Wylene, General Counsel, to report the following action:

> The RCRC Board of Directors in closed session authorized the General Counsel to initiate litigation of one case, and to initiate litigation of a second case upon certain conditions. When and if the actions are formally commenced, the title and nature of the actions, the defendants, and other particulars shall be disclosed to any person upon inquiry, unless to do so would jeopardize RCRC's ability to effectuate service of process on one or more unserved parties, or that to do so would jeopardize RCRC's ability to conclude existing settlement negotiations to its advantage.
>
> **All Supervisors present voted "Aye," except:**
>
> **"No": El Dorado County; Nevada County; Sutter County**
>
> **Absent: Sierra County; Tuolumne County**

**Adjournment**
Chair, Supervisor Miles Menetrey, Mariposa County, adjourned the RCRC Board of Directors Meeting at 11:41 a.m.

**To:** Members of the RCRC Board of Directors

**From:** Carolyn Jhajj, Communications Director

**Date:** August 11, 2026

**Re:** RCRC Strategic Plan Mid-Year Update – **Informational Item**

In 2024, following an extensive engagement effort, the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) developed and approved the 2025-2027 RCRC Strategic Plan. The plan serves as a guiding document for the Board of Directors to set policies and priorities for the organization for a period of three calendar years beginning January 2025 and concluding December 2027. What follows is a mid-year update as of June 30, 2026 on the implementation of the strategic plan. This update was also previously shared with the RCRC Executive Committee at their July 29th meeting.

**Implementation**

Implementation of the strategic plan is tracked in several ways. Each objective of the strategic plan has an assigned staff lead and identified metrics for measuring progress. Metric data is gathered annually at the end of each calendar year.

The staff leads provide quarterly updates throughout the year to assist in tracking progress on each strategy. The status of each strategy is provided in a color-coded system as of June 30, 2026 and indicates whether the strategy is progressing in accordance with its target timeline. (See attachment "2025-2027 RCRC Strategic Plan: Mid-Year Status Update").

**Key Highlights**

The majority of strategies in the Strategic Plan are progressing positively in accordance with their target timeline with 18 strategies (27%) having reached completion. Ten strategies (15%) have been delayed either due to competing priorities, federal changes, and/or other related delays. Staff continue to monitor and pursue implementation of these strategies.

Some key highlights at mid-year include the following:

Broadband Deployment (Goal: Equitable Access; Objective: Broadband): GSCA has transitioned several Round 1 projects from planning into active implementation. Glenn County Phase 1 marked a significant milestone with its groundbreaking ceremony in April, and construction activities are underway with approximately 24,000 feet of conduit installed to date. Environmental review and permitting activities have continued across multiple jurisdictions, while advancement of final engineering and project delivery activities for the remaining 7 projects, including Glenn County Phase 2, is dependent upon execution of the Design-Build agreement currently being finalized with FiberTel.

GSCA continues public outreach and stakeholder engagement through the Golden State Fiber program, while marketing and communications initiatives have expanded to support upcoming construction milestones, service awareness, and community participation activities associated with project deployment.

Housing Affordability (Goal: Equitable Access; Objective: Housing): Golden State Finance Authority (GSFA) has continued implementation of two popular housing assistance programs: the Assist-to-Own Program and the ReCoverCA Homebuyer Assistance (HBA) Program. Following launch in April 2022, the Assist-to-Own Program provides member county employees with up to 5.5% in down payment and closing cost assistance (DPA) with attractive First Mortgage interest rates. To date 210 county employees have locked in an interest rate or completed purchase of a home through the program.

The ReCoverCA Homebuyer Assistance (HBA) Program, provided by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) in collaboration with GSFA as Program Manager, provides low- to moderate-income households impacted by past California wildfires with up to $350,000 in assistance to purchase a home in the state outside high-risk areas.

Health Services Advocacy (Goal: Equitable Access; Objective: Health Services): With significant downstream impacts for county indigent programs expected from Medi-Cal reductions under H.R. 1, RCRC put forth considerable effort this budget cycle advocating along with a coalition of county associations for state funding to rebuild indigent care programs. While funding for increased county workload for eligibility was included in the Governor's 2026-27 May Revision, it does not mention or include funding for indigent care. RCRC, along with our county partners, will continue to advocate for additional fiscal resources with the resurgence of this population into county care.

Enhanced Legal Advocacy Efforts (Goal: Impactful Policy Advancement; Objective: Local Control): RCRC has increased engagement with the Commission on State Mandates to obtain reimbursements for state mandated costs to counties. At this time, the Commission has issued a favorable draft decision for one RCRC-backed test claim (Race-Blind Charging, 24-TC-07), and the matter is set for hearing in August 2026. Four additional test claims are presently in process and expected to be filed within the next several months. RCRC has also submitted "Legislatively Determined Mandate" requests in multiple matters, which extends the statute of limitations to file test claims for those mandates. In June, RCRC released a Request for Information seeking qualified consultants to assist member counties in filing annual claims for reimbursement under Commission-approved mandates, and anticipates offering these services to counties later this year.

In addition to the reimbursement work, RCRC is leading a coalition challenging AT&T's efforts to terminate its Carrier of Last Resort obligations in several administrative and court proceedings. RCRC is also sponsoring the legal challenge to the CPUC's termination of an important bioenergy program.

Lastly, RCRC's counsel has collaborated with other local government organizations on numerous filings in cases concerning cannabis, housing, local taxes, and public contracting, including drafting full-length amicus briefs for both the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and California Supreme Court, and recently participated in oral argument before the California Supreme Court in one of these cases (Tesoro Refining & Marketing Company v. City of Carson).

RAI Advisory Council (Goal: Impactful Policy Advancement; Objective: Rural Education and Research): Rural Advancement Institute, Inc. (RAI) established the RAI Advisory Council in May 2026 and held its inaugural meeting. The council includes representation from 8 core sectors that provide strategic guidance and partnership opportunities to advance RAI's mission.

Forest Resiliency Advancements through GSNR (Goal: Healthy Communities; Objective: Forest Resiliency & Wildfire): Golden State Natural Resources (GSNR) has continued its efforts at advancing forest resilience through completion of the first official project under GSNR's Biomass Transportation Assistance Program, the Grizzly Cull Desk Removal Project. Completed in June, the project hauled an estimated 10,325 green tons (413 truck loads at 25 green ton proxy) which were removed and transported to three end-use facilities. Discussions are occurring amongst GSNR, consultants, industry participants, and Forest Service personnel to identify the next potential projects that could benefit most from this transportation program. GSNR is reviewing a list of 18 potential projects across 7 national forests.

Strategies for Higher Education Access (Goal: Healthy Communities; Objective: Economic Development): A few members of the RCRC economic development and government affairs divisions participated in and completed a formal team project through the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and the Claremont Lincoln University. The project developed is a "pitch" for resource funding to expand postsecondary education opportunities in rural California. The project team utilized RCRC research and county Higher Education Working Groups and will be sharing the project more broadly to assist in attracting potential funding opportunities.

Small Counties Grant Assistance (Goal: Operational Excellence; Objective: Member Engagement): As part of RCRC's efforts to support small county grant acquisition, RCRC is currently piloting a new artificial intelligence (AI) technology grant's module. So far, RCRC has submitted two grant applications using this AI pilot module. While these applications ultimately did not result in grant awards, the experience provided some useful feedback on how to better use the program and RCRC is planning to use the technology for future Sustainable Transportation Planning Grants from CalTrans in the late summer/fall. Additionally, in May RCRC submitted a $5 million Behavioral Health planning grant for the North State counties focused on expanding rural behavioral health capacity.

**Next Steps**

The strategic plan is meant to be a flexible document. For that reason, the plan is to be reviewed annually by the Board and updated as needed at the beginning of each calendar year. The next check-in with the Board of Directors and Board Executive Committee will occur in early 2027 and will include any recommendations for adjustments.

**Recommended Action**
Receive mid-year update on the 2025-2027 RCRC Strategic Plan.

**Attachment**
- 2025-2027 RCRC Strategic Plan: Mid-Year Status Update

# 2025-2027 RCRC STRATEGIC PLAN

**Update as of June 30, 2026**

| Equitable Access Goal | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Objective** | **Strategy** | **Status Update** | **Notes** |
| Broadband | Ensure inclusion of rural California in accessing state and federal grant funding for digital equity program. | | **On Hold.** Submitted Digital Equity Competitive grant to US Dept of Commerce, NTIA, that includes digital equity allocation request of $12 million that will fund work in all 40 GSCA member counties. Notified May 2024, that Digital Equity programs have been cut by new federal administration. |
| | Initialize implementation of GSCA open-access municipal broadband projects by December 2026. | | **In Progress**. GSCA has transitioned several Round 1 projects from planning into active implementation. Glenn County Phase 1 marked a significant milestone with its groundbreaking ceremony, and construction activities are underway with approximately 24,000 feet of conduit installed to date. Environmental review and permitting activities have continued across multiple jurisdictions, while advancement of final engineering and project delivery activities is dependent upon execution of the Design-Build agreement currently being finalized with FiberTel.<br><br>Planning for Phase 2 infrastructure locations and network operations requirements remains underway. GSCA continues public outreach and stakeholder engagement through the Golden State Fiber program, while marketing and communications initiatives have expanded to support upcoming construction milestones, service awareness, and community participation activities associated with project deployment. |
| Housing | Evaluate extension of the Assist to Own Program by June 2026. | | **In Progress.** We have utilized approximately $2M of the board approved $3M of DPA Second Mortgages. This will likely take us through August 2026 to evaluate additional funding. |
| | Evaluate further extension of the HCD RecoverCA program through December 2026. | ✓ | **Completed (Ongoing).** HCD continues to provide additional funding and we are likely to continue the RecoverCA Program into 2026 with additional programs being added in 2025 and 2026. |
| | Explore opportunities to grow workforce housing in rural California through December 2027. | | **In Progress.** We will continue researching funding sources and meeting with member county staff and multi-family developers to seek opportunities for housing development in these areas. |
| | Explore opportunities to maintain and increase awareness of GSFA programs in member counties through December 2026. | | **In Progress.** Continue marketing efforts and lender/realtor outreach in member counties. The HCD programs are heavily focused on rural areas due to prior fire devastations, which we continue to maintain awareness in these areas as funding is available. |

| | | | |
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| Health Services | Provide resources and educational opportunities for rural county supervisors and staff to enhance their knowledge of statutory requirements, funding opportunities, and program implementation around Proposition 1 and conservatorships beginning January 2025. | | **In Progress.** Providing support to counties around grant application for the unmet needs round of proposition 1 funding. Provided input to the LAO around rural county experiences with BH grant funding and the final report included recommendations to help rural counties in the Prop 1 grant rounds. Meeting montly with CAOs of counties less than 30,000 population to provide support regarding BH mandates.RCRC, Steinberg Institute, and Arch Collaborative hosted a north state counties convening to discuss recent mandates, funding opportunities, and to identify gaps in service. |
| | Engage with organizations and service providers to advocate for better healthcare reimbursement for rural providers that reflects service costs and adequate funding for indigent health populations returning to counties due to federal changes beginning January 2025. | | **In Progress.** Advocating in DC regarding reimbursment for Medicaid and Medicare. Collaborating with the Prop. 35 coalition regarding the MCO Tax and federal Medicaid proposals. Advocated around H.R. 1 components that impacted rural health care systems and direct cost shifts to counties. Advocating for indigent health funding for the population returning to counties for limited health care due to H.R. 1 Medicaid eligibility changes. |
| | Partner with other interested organizations to enhance health and behavioral health resources for counties, particularly related to Proposition 1, CARE Act, and H.R. 1 impacts beginning January 2025. | | **In Progress.** Working with Cohort 1 counties to support SB 90 claim submission related to CARE Court. Monthly meetings with county partners and CalHHS regarding CARE Court implementation. Meeting montly with CAOs of counties less than 30,000 population to provide support regarding BH mandates. Advocating for Prop 1 prevention funds to be direct to all parts of the state and rural counties are not left behind. |
| | Engage with organizations and partners to address health workforce recruitment and retention needs and opportunities to create a pipeline for future public sector health professionals beginning January 2025. | | **In Progress.** Submitted a grant application with the Steinburg Institute that was ultimately not funded. RCRC established the Recruitment and Retention Ad Hoc Committee to identify strategies for addressing workforce shortages. |
| Insurance | Collaborate with Insurance commissioner and Dept of Insurance on implementation of the Sustainable Insurance Strategy in accordance with RCRC's policy principles, beginning January 2025. | | **In Progress.** RCRC continues to communicate/collaborate with CDI on the implementation of the SIS, both directly and through our work at the Wildfire Mitigation Advisory Committee. |
| | Advocate for a federal emergency insurance backstop in the next Congressional session of January 2025. | | **In Progress.** Insurance will remain a priority topic for RCRC's 2026 federal advocacy platform. Senator Schiff has re-introduced the INSURE Act, which RCRC is supporting. |
| | Advocate for enhanced pace and scale of management of US Forest Service land beginning January 2025. | | **In Progress.** Pace and scale will remain a priority issue in RCRC's 2026 federal advocacy platform. RCRC is working to form relationships with new USFS leadership to further this goal, as well as working with leadership at CNRA to ensure that the state/federal collaboration continues. This will be a dynamic task while the Administration completes its restructure of the USFS. RCRC has also supported several federal bills to advance pace and scale; most notably, RCRC has been actively advocating for the passage of the Fix Our Forests Act. |
| | Work with state legislative insurance committees on identifying and addressing any gaps in the Sustainable Insurance Strategy following implementation beginning January 2026. | | **In Progress**. RCRC is advancing policies to secure affordable and available property insurance, including policy on home hardening and work with the Governor's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force. |

| KEY | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Strategy is progressing in accordance with the target timeline, or is completed. | | Progress or completion of strategy is experiencing challenges or delays, but still within target timeline. | | Completion of strategy is past or anticipated to be past its target timeline. |

## Impactful Policy Advancement- Status Update: 2025-2027 RCRC Strategic Plan

| Impactful Policy Advancement Goal | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Objective | Strategy | Status Update | Notes |
| Innovative Approaches | Increase pursuit of rural representative placement on newly established state or federal committees and/or taskforces beginning January 2025. | | **In Progress.** Nominated Supervisor Byrne to a federal SRS Regional Advisory Committee. Have also submitted Supervisor Crandell for consideration for the federal Department of Interior Tribal Advisory Council. |
| Innovative Approaches | Identify Board Delegate relationships with both legislators and government administration and incorporate into future delegate onboarding by December 2026. | | **In Progress.** An initial framework was built, but will explore expanding upon this effort in 2026. Working with the Clerk of the Board to continually update. With change in Senate Leadership, cultivating relationship with Limon Capitol Office and Supe. Nelson. |
| Innovative Approaches | Explore opportunities to further incorporate internal and external communication into policy efforts beginning March 2025. | | **Completed (Ongoing).** Evaluated potential options and in the process of implementing. Established a GA point of contact for information sharing with Comms. Working with Economic Development on developing GIS county profiles to assist in data sharing and advocacy efforts. Exploring updates to end of annual summary booklet. |
| Local Control | Increase engagement with the Commission on State Mandates to obtain reimbursements for state mandated costs to counties beginning January 2025. | | **In Progress.** The Commission has issued a favorable draft decision for one RCRC-backed test claim (Race-Blind Charging, 24-TC-07), and the matter is set for hearing in August 2026. Four additional test claims are presently in process, and expected to be filed within the next several months. RCRC has also submitted "Legislatively Determined Mandate" requests in multiple matters, which extends the statute of limitations to file test claims for those mandates. Additionally, RCRC staff participates in the SB 90 Mandates Working Group, consisting of urban, suburban, and rural county representatives, on an ongoing basis. In June, RCRC released a Request for Information seeking qualified consultant to assist member counties in filing annual claims for reimbursement under Commission-approved mandates, and anticipates offering these services to counties later this year. |
| Local Control | Increase engagement in state/federal regulatory matters and administrative actions affecting local control, including ongoing review and engagement, as appropriate, in agency actions occurring outside of formal regulatory proceedings beginning January 2025. | | **In Progress.** Initiated proactive engagement with the Attorney General's Office Opinion Unit, to ensure that RCRC is included in consultation regarding formal A.G. opinions affecting rural counties. |

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| | Enhance legal advocacy efforts, such as friend of the court filings and potential impact litigation, beginning July 2025. | | **In Progress.** RCRC is leading a coalition challenging AT&T's efforts to terminate its Carrier of Last Resort obligations in several administrative and court proceedings. RCRC is also sponsoring the legal challenge to the CPUC's termination of an important bioenergy program. RCRC's counsel has collaborated with other local government organizations on numerous filings in cases concerning cannabis, housing, local taxes, and public contracting, including drafting full-length amicus briefs for both the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and California Supreme Court, and recently participated in oral argument before the California Supreme Court in one of these cases (Tesoro Refining & Marketing Company v. City of Carson). |
| **Rural Education and Research** | Conduct educational activity and research study annually that informs policy makers of the needs and challenges faced by rural communities. | ✓ | **Completed (Ongoing).** Planning continued for the 2026 Northern Sacramento Valley educational tour, which will highlight issues affecting rural communities in northern California.<br><br>Phase II of the University of California, Santa Barbara, fire and EMS response capacity study has been initiated and is expected to continue through Q3 2027. |
| | Explore innovative opportunities for advancing partnership engagement, including establishment of an RAI advisory committee, beginning January 2025. | ✓ | **Completed (Ongoing).** The RAI Advisory Council was established in May 2026, representing 8 core sectors that provide strategic guidance and partnership opportunities to advance RAI's mission. The Advisory Council held its inaugural meeting. Ongoing efforts will focus on cultivating engagement and collaboration to support RAI's continued development.<br><br>RCRC: Strategic partnerships with unusual entities, e.g. Defenders of Wildlife (to secure livestock compensation funding for wolf depredation) and working with Bay Area legislators to secure changes in CEQA and Williamson Act, e.g. Senator Scott Wiener and Assembly Member Buffy Wicks). |
| | Review and update RAI Business Plan by May 2025. | ✓ | **Completed.** The RAI Board adopted the updated Business Plan in May 2025. Staff has engaged the full RCRC Board to help identify priorities for future educational and research topics. |

*Last Updated June 30, 2026*

| KEY | | | | | | |
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| | | Strategy is progressing in accordance with the target timeline, or is completed. | | Progress or completion of strategy is experiencing challenges or delays, but still within target timeline. | | Completion of strategy is past or anticipated to be past its target timeline. |

**Healthy Communities- Status Update: 2025-2027 RCRC Strategic Plan**

| Healthy Communities Goal | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Objective** | **Strategy** | **Status Update** | **Notes** |
| **Forest Resiliency & Wildfire** | Target advocacy efforts beginning January 2025 to pursue funding opportunities for the following initiatives:<br><br>Forest stewardship, Wildfire Response, Community Resiliency, Regulatory Streamlining, Infrastructure, Upper Watershed Management, Disaster tax relief for wildfire victims, fair plan insurance, woody biomass regulations in Low Carbon Fuels Act, Implementation of Federal Policy, Excess biomass utilization, Wildfire Recovery & Reforestation, Workforce Development, Utility Wildfire Mitigation, and Sustainable Recreation Economy. | | **In Progress.** RCRC staff continues to pursue and protect funding for forest and wildland-related programs and projects. Staff is working with a broad coalition to re-prioritize forest stewardship funding in the Cap-and-Invest program. Staff is also engaging on efforts to help state agencies quickly issue grants and other funds from the Climate Bond. |
| | Leverage RCRC's relationships with federal land management agencies, including the GSFA-held U.S. Forest Service Master Stewardship Agreement (MSA), to facilitate the planning, review, and implementation of expanded forest management activities benefitting member counties. | | **In Progress.** RCRC continues to engage USFS leadership regarding California's 18 National Forests for the purpose of increasing forest treatment pace and scale. Staff have also engaged the new Administration to facilitate recent Executive Orders and Emergency Declarations calling for increasing pace and scale of forest management activities. Despite changes in leadership at the federal level, staff have effectively engaged new leadership for the purpose of effectuating both the federal government's goals and GSNR's mission of restoring forests to a more resilient and fire/pest resistant status. |
| | Complete environmental review by December 2026 and permitting by June 2027 of GSNR's forest resiliency project. | | **In Progress.** On June 25, 2025, the GSNR Board approved the exploration and development of a project alterative. Staff are currently preparing that alternative and anticipate recirculating the DEIR accordingly in late summer 2026. |
| | Initiate the implementation of a forest resiliency project pipeline beginning January 2025. | | **In Progress.** GSNR is pursuing projects that will help fund and provide access to feedstock that would otherwise be nonviable material and will remove hazardous fuels from the National Forest lands to end-users. With the success of the MDF SPA, staff hope to create a template for other projects. GSNR has also completed the first project under its Biomass Transportation Assistance Program in June 2026. |
| | Advance partnership development with private entities and/or investors for GSNR's forest resiliency demonstration project. | | **In Progress.** As has been the case throughout GSNR's predevelopment activities, staff remain connected and engaged with private industry and maintain consistent contact providing updates as requested. Staff are working with private industry throughout the supply chain. |

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| | Initiate a Pilot Biomass Transportation Assistance Program beginning December 2025. | ✓ | **Completed (Ongoing).** The first official project under GSNR's Biomass Transportation Assistance Program, the Grizzly Cull Deck Removal Project, was completed in June, hauling an estimated 10,325 green tons (413 truck loads @ 25 green ton proxy) which were removed and transported to three end-use facilities. Continuous discussions remain between GSNR, consultants, industry participants, and Forest Service personnel to identify the next potential projects that could benefit most from this transportation subsidy. GSNR is reviewing a list of 18 potential projects across 7 national forests. |
| **Resource Management** | Engage in state and federal implementation of the 30 x 30 conservation plan beginning January 2025. | | **In Progress.** Staff continues to engage on state 30x30 implementation. Federal program has been shelved by the current Administration |
| | Evaluate new solid waste management regulations to ensure local jurisdictions aren't bearing the costs of statewide programs beginning January 2025. | | **In Progress.** Staff is deeply engaged in development of CalRecycle's SB 54 implementing regulations, as well as CARB's landfill methane regulations. Staff was able to secure several changes in the CARB regulations. |
| | Actively monitor implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act and funding disbursement from the Safe Drinking Water program in line with rural county interest beginning January 2025. | | **In Progress**. RCRC is engaged with ACWA and NCWA on water policy issues throughout the state and monitoring/engaging in relevant legislation. |
| | Engage in the development of the State's sustainable recreation plan beginning June 2025. | | **In Progress.** RCRC is engaged with CNRA as well as the developers of the sustainable recreation plan to ensure it meets the goals of member counties. |
| | Implement the Rural Zero Waste Program through June 2026. | ✓ | **Completed.** ESJPA has submitted the final draft report to CalRecycle for review. |
| **Infrastructure** | Increase funding to support and expand the Rural Grant Assistance Program (RGAP) to assist member counties in implementing basic community infrastructure projects (i.e. roads, water, bridges, sewer, etc.), including connecting counties to technical and financial resources, beginning January 2025. | | **In Progress.** Five grant applications were submitted for various regional California Jobs First Catalyst opportunities. While none were successful, it did market the program to a JPA that initiated a loan to support a Catalyst grant. Staff continues to have discussions with financial institutions including Statewide CDC Board for potential use of USDA funds and CRA funding. |
| | Ensure member counties are informed of and have access to federal and state funding to enhance cybersecurity by December 2025. | | **In Progress** Program has been reinstated and upcoming funding cycles will be coming. Unfortunately new cycles now have a high match requirement diminishing opportunities. |
| | Identify funding and/or partners for development of ZEV Readiness Plans and ZEV Infrastructure Deployment by December 2026. | | **In Progress.** CalTrans grant applications were submitted for ZEV Readiness Plans in five rural counties, none were successful. Preparing for next round of grants through the Sustainable Transportation Planning Program. Involved in workshop guidance to alter program allowing RCRC to apply for several counties. Next round of funding opens in August 2026. |

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| **Economic Development** | Explore partnership and grant opportunities regarding industry specific workforce development and workforce training initiatives with education providers beginning June 2025. | | **In Progress**. In implementation phase of grant from Sierra Jobs First to work with Amador College Connect to develop a college industrial arts training program. Partnered with an awardee of a $750,000 grant from Sacramento Region California Jobs First Catalyst Fund for job training for construction and energy infrastructure-related jobs. In addition, a $600,000 contribution from 211 Connecting Point to us as a match to apply for a California Workforce Development grant for $1,300,000 supporting local and tribal training for construction and energy infrastructure-related jobs to match and extend the Catalyst grant award. The grant was not awarded. Applied for two grants in December with EDD to augment funds for Amador College Connect and 211 Connecting Point totaling $3.47 million. Application Pending. Supported Amador College Connect in two grant applications to EDD-Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Pathways and Black Rock Future Builders. |
| | Conduct research to inventory assets and identify needs in education/workforce training in rural counties currently lacking a community college by December 2025. | ✓ | **Completed.** Built a network and completed research on specific industry-based needs. Research being used in implementation of Amador College Connect Industrial Arts program as well as Claremont Lincoln University Team College Opportunity plan development. The University-based strategy is now completed and the "pich" will be developed for each potential funding opportunity. |
| | Work with partners to develop a strategy and identify funding for improving college access in rural counties by December 2027. | | **In Progress.** Continuing to access data from a growing list of partners including the community colleges, state universities, workforce/training agencies, and non-profits. Continue to seek funding for strategy development through legislation, fund raising efforts and partnerships. Supported by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and Claremont Lincoln University, a formal team project started October to develop a "pitch" for resource funding utilizing RCRC research and county Higher Education Working Groups, now completed. |
| | Pilot a grant identification and writing tool by December 2026. | | **In Progress.** Avila AI now in contract and is in a beta stage. Economic Development researching other similar programs. |
| | Complete the GIS-Based Economic Profile Program by June 2027. | | **In Progress.** ESRI is engaged and has provided a workplan for the profiles. RCRC staff has now creating proposed "story maps" to be utilized in the first program. |
| **Tribal Collaboration** | Explore opportunities for partnership with tribes that may result in projects of mutual benefit beginning January 2025. | | **In Progress.** Have identified tribes, tribal leadership, and tribal priorities for tribes located within RCRC member counties. Have developed a brochure that introduces RCRC and affiliate entities to tribal entities across rural California. The brochure invites collaboration and cooperation where similar community goals exist. A tribal representative of the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians has been appointed to the RAI Board. |
| | Engage with representatives of tribal entities to identify grant funding opportunities and potential grant writing assistance relative to broadband beginning January 2025. | ✓ | **Completed (Ongoing).** Successfully partnered with Enterprise Rancheria on writing of $250,000 CPUC Tribal Technical Assistance grant that the tribe was awarded. The Bishop Paiute Tribe is partner in GSCA FFA Round 2 Inyo County application. Nisenan Triba from Nevada County area is included in Sacramento Area California Jobs First Catalyst award. Applied for $1.3 million workforce and $2 million in training grants from the California Workforce Development Board and EDD, partnering with Sierra College and the Nevada City Rancheria tribe. |

*Last Updated June 30, 2026*

| KEY | | Strategy is progressing in accordance with the target timeline, or is completed. | | Progress or completion of strategy is experiencing challenges or delays, but still within target timeline. | | Completion of strategy is past or anticipated to be past its target timeline. |
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**Operational Excellence- Status Update: 2025-2027 RCRC Strategic Plan**

| Operational Excellence Goal | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Objective | Strategy | Status Update | Notes |
| Fiscal Health | Assess policy and system needs for administering and monitoring state and federal grant funds across the organization by June 2026. | | **In Progress.** Considering potential options, including utilizing additional modules available within new version of current GL software or other software options that are available to us (which includes OpenGov). AI pilot also underway. Currently utilizing microsoft office tools to ensure tracking is compliant with granting agencies. |
| | Evaluate technologies to improve efficiencies and automated capabilities in internal finance and reporting systems by December 2026. | | **In Progress.** Considering potential options, including utilizing additional modules available within our current GL software. Plan is to enhance our existing GL software starting in later part of 2026 and to complete the transformation in early part of 2027. |
| | Develop an operational risk assessment plan by December 2027. | | **Upcoming.** This work has not yet begun. As some entities start issuing bonds, overall risk assessment will be considered. Anticipate timely implementation. |
| Technology | Increase GIS capabilities for the organization and form recommendations by December 2026. | | **Upcoming.** Acknowledgement of potential need for marginal increased compute. Bigger challenge is bandwidth for extra large files: can be 60 GB+. No definitive requirements defined yet. |
| | Adopt additional CIS Framework components and complete Phase 1 by December 2026. | | **In Progress.** Adopted initial three (of 18) IG 1 group initiatives to focus on. Planning Data Governance. |
| | Scope disaster recovery capabilities in alignment with CIS recommendations by December 2026. | | **In Progress.** DR CIS scoping contigent on other IG 1 group initial implementation(s). Q1-Q2 for reassessment now aligned with vendor onboarding. |
| | Explore Artificial intelligence technology integration opportunities by December 2026. | | **In Progress.** Multiple AI Systems under active development. Gathering data and proirity for additional. Staff AI training for Copilot Chat target Q1. |
| | Evaluate human resources organizational structure and practices by June 2025. | | **Completed (Ongoing).** RCRC continues to evaluate and the HR Structure and we continue to be transparent with staff via the employee workgroup and allstaff meetings, as to planned or anticipated changes, points of contact, etc. Continue to evaluate all the beenfits offered, including EAP and how employees can advantage of services offered. |
| | Reevaluate standard hiring practices that facilitate acquisition of a robust and diverse pool of qualified candidates by June 2025. | | **Completed (Ongoing).** This is ongoing. Actively evaluating our recruiting practices to ensure a robust and diverse pool of candidates. |

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| **Human Resources** | Implement employee engagement action plan in coordination with the employee work group by December 2025. | ✓ | **Completed.** Much of the engagement action plan has been implemented, including analysis of HR services and benefits, evaluation of hiring practices, conducting a team strengths-based workship, evaluation of Juneteenth options, and a pilot of an interdepartmental division check-in. A new engagement survey was conducted in early 2026 and those action items are currently being implemented. |
| | Conduct succession planning assessment, specifically for key roles impacting business operations, with mitigation recommendations by December 2025. | ✓ | **Completed.** Conducted assessment with additional positions subsequently added to GSCA. Additional assessments to occur as needed. |
| | Formalize career development plans centered around individual departments by March 2026. | | **Upcoming.** |
| | Study how regulatory environment affects RCRC's operations and update policies accordingly by June 2026. | ✓ | **Completed (Ongoing).** Annual employee handbook update is completed by middle of January which has the most significant impact on our policies; Additionally, RCRC is a members of CalChamber and regularly attends their employment law updates; We also rely on our outside HR consultant, Silvers HR to assist with keeping RCRC compliant. |
| **Member Engagement** | Enhance proactive Board member involvement in policy advancement and advocacy beginning January 2025. | | **In Progress.** The SGMA, Predator Mngt., and Recruitment and Retention Ad Hoc committees are currently active and meeting regularly. |
| | Conduct onboarding for all new Board members that incorporates education on opportunities for engagement and leadership within the organization by March 2025. | ✓ | **Completed (Ongoing) --** 2026 onboard is complete. The next series of onboarding sessions will occur in January 2027. |
| | Strengthen RCRC's role as a convenor and administrator of initiatives affecting multiple member counties beginning January 2026. | | **In Progress.** This effort is well underway with the Jail Medical Services Planning effort which includes five regions and 25 counties. In addition a regional Behavioral Health planning grant was submitted for the North State counties. |
| | Evaluate small county grants initiative to determine effectiveness and any areas for improvement by December 2026. | | **In Progress.** RCRC is currently piloting a new artificial intelligence (AI) technology grant's module. So far, RCRC has submitted two grant applications using this AI pilot module. While these applications ultimately did not result in grant awards, the experience provided some useful feedback on how to better use the program and RCRC is planning to use the technology for future Sustainable Transportation Planning Grants from CalTrans in the late summer/fall. |
| | Provide strategic plan presentations to the board of supervisors for all member counties by December 2026. | | In Progress. We are past the halfway point of our second round of presentations to all 40 counties. On the calendar next are Inyo, Mendocino, Napa, and San Benito counties. |
| | Pilot inter-divisional coordination meetings by June 2026. | | **In Progress**. First pilot meeting between two divisions occured. Evaluating feedback and determining options for next steps. |

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| **Communication** | Explore opportunities for expanding media networks and proactive media outreach by June 2025. | ✓ | **Completed (Ongoing)**. Utilized a PR firm for outreach efforts for one of RCRC's affiliate entities and conducted some targeted media outreach. Increasing op-ed and letter to the editor submissions and continuing to explore networking opportunities. Updated media contact lists. Assisting with proactive media pitches related to COLR coalition work. |
| | Evaluate need for expansion of communication platforms and tools for affiliate entities by December 2025. | ✓ | **Completed.** Social media accounts for GSNR and GSCA's Golden State Fiber have both been established. Website established for Golden State Fiber with a marketing plan in development from contracted partner UTOPIA. ESJPA exploring adding the development of a newsletter to their business plan. |
| | Update the administrative platform of the GSCA and GSNR websites to better align with other websites in the organization by June 2026. | ✓ | **Completed.** Work completed in August 2025 |
| | Explore development of additional materials or informational resources to advance efficient communication with members (i.e. grant notifications, uniform templates, webinars, county visits, contact management system, etc.) by December 2026. | | **In Progress.** Staff have begun scheduling county visits and providing webinars. Media training provided to Board members. Looking to develop new informational materials on RCRC and affiliates, new summary document in progress. Partnering with Economic Development on new grant updates for the RCRC website. |

*Updated June 30, 2026*

| KEY | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (green) | Strategy is progressing in accordance with the target timeline, or is completed. | (yellow) | Progress or completion of strategy is experiencing challenges or delays, but still within target timeline. | (red) | Completion of strategy is past or anticipated to be past its target timeline. |

RCRC
REPRESENTING CALIFORNIA'S
RURAL COUNTIES

| | |
|---|---|
| **To:** | Members of the RCRC Board of Directors |
| **From:** | Maggie Chui, Director of Board Operations<br>Patrick Blacklock, President and CEO |
| **Date:** | August 11, 2026 |
| **Re:** | RCRC Proposed 2027 Meeting Calendar – **Informational Item** |

## Summary

The attached draft calendar outlines the proposed 2027 meeting schedule for RCRC and its affiliated entities. The schedule continues the practice of aligning RCRC, GSFA, and GSCA meetings on the same day to maximize efficiency.

## Issue

Attached is the proposed 2027 schedule of key meetings, including Board of Directors and Executive Committee meetings. To assist with calendar planning, staff has also included currently known meeting dates for the National Association of Counties (NACo), the California State Association of Counties (CSAC), and NACo's Western Interstate Region (WIR). Meeting dates for some organizations are still pending and will be incorporated as they become available.

The 2027 calendar includes two multi-day Board of Directors meetings. The first will be held in conjunction with the Meeting in the County of the Chair, hosted in Santa Barbara County. The best dates for this meeting are still being assessed. The second will be held in conjunction with the RCRC Annual Meeting in Sonoma County.

If any of the scheduled meetings prove not to be necessary to conduct the business of the organization, the meeting may be cancelled or rescheduled. Staff will keep affected members informed of any schedule changes throughout the year.

## Recommendation

No action necessary. Members may provide feedback, which will be incorporated into the calendars for RCRC's affiliated entities, as appropriate. The proposed calendar will then be brought back to the RCRC Board of Directors for approval at the September Board meeting.

## Attachment

- RCRC Proposed 2027 Meeting Calendar

# RCRC AND AFFILIATED ENTITIES
# 2027 Meeting Calendar

All dates and locations are subject to change

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| January | | |
| **January 20** | **RCRC, GSFA & GSCA Board Meetings** | **Sacramento** |
| **January 20** | **RCRC Installation Reception** | **Sacramento** |
| February | | |
| February 10 | RCRC, GSFA & GSCA Executive Committee Meetings (et al.) | Sacramento |
| February 19-23 | NACo Legislative Conference | Washington, DC |
| March | | |
| **March 24** | **RCRC, GSFA & GSCA Board Meetings** | **Sacramento** |
| April | | |
| April 28 | RCRC, GSFA & GSCA Executive Committee Meetings (et al.) | Sacramento |
| May | | |
| May 12-13 | CSAC Legislative Conference | Sacramento |
| **TBD - May or June** | **RCRC, GSFA & GSCA Board Meetings** | **Santa Barbara County** |
| May 25-28 | NACo WIR Conference | Douglas County, NV |
| July | | |
| June 29 or July 14 | RCRC, GSFA & GSCA Executive Committee Meetings (et al.) | Sacramento |
| July 23-26 | NACo Annual Conference | Chatham County, GA |
| August | | |
| **August 18** | **RCRC, GSFA & GSCA Board Meetings** | **Sacramento** |
| September | | |
| **September 22-24** | **RCRC Annual Meeting** | **Sonoma County** |
| **September 24** | **RCRC, GSFA & GSCA Board Meetings** | **Sonoma County** |
| October | | |
| October 20 | RCRC, GSFA & GSCA Executive Committee Meetings (et al.) | Sacramento |
| November | | |
| November 17 | RCRC, GSFA & GSCA Executive Committee Meetings (et al.) | Sacramento |
| November 29 -December 2 | CSAC Annual Meeting | San Francisco County |
| December | | |
| **December 8** | **RCRC, GSFA & GSCA Board Meetings** | **Sacramento** |

**To:** Members of the RCRC Board of Directors

**From:** Staci Heaton, Senior Policy Advocate

**Date:** August 11, 2026

**Re:** Forest Management and Wildfire Update – **Informational Item**

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## Summary

The California Legislature, Congress and various state and federal agencies continue to address California's persistent catastrophic wildfire events while working to improve the health and resilience of the state's forests and wildlands. This memo provides an update on many of those activities, as well as RCRC's involvement and advocacy efforts.


## Background

California has experienced increased levels of wildfire risk, and faster, more intense burning fires each year over the past decade due to years of mismanaged forests combined with escalating impacts from climate change. Currently, more than 4,000 active wildfires are occurring across California, having burned more than 200,000 acres and destroyed nearly 80 structures. The largest of the recent wildfires is the Rock Fire in Inyo County, which nears containment at just over 12,000 acres.

The state is undertaking a number of actions designed to respond to California's increased fire activity in both the near and long-term, and the federal government has also begun taking measures to respond to increased wildfire activity nationwide.

## Issue

### USDA Forest Service Reorganization

In March 2026, the USDA Forest Service (USFS) officially announced a dramatic reorganization that would dissolve the current nine regions, replacing them with 15 state directors' offices. The ultimate goal would be to move 500 USFS administrative positions from Washington, DC to a new headquarters in Fort Collins, CO. The plan also includes a USFS state office in Placerville, CA.

The reorganization has come under scrutiny because of plans to contract much of the USFS research capacity by closing several research stations nationwide. The proposal is particularly controversial in the wake of workforce cuts of up to 20 percent in 2025. A large stakeholder coalition has filed a lawsuit to enjoin the reorganization, with a hearing set for September 1, 2026.

Draft Wildfire and Landscape Resilience Action Plan

In July 2026, the California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force released the Draft Wildfire and Landscape Resilience Action Plan for public review and comment. The Draft Plan is an update of the Task Force's initial Action Plan, which was released in 2021. The new version will cover the years 2026 through 2031, and provide the state's roadmap for wildfire prevention and forest resilience activities.

Included in the Draft Plan is a comprehensive wood utilization strategy which encompasses biomass, sustainable timber harvest, and wood processing capacity. The Draft Plan also relies on the development of a mass timber strategy. Earlier this year, RCRC helped found the Mass Timber Coalition, a stakeholder group including local governments, state agencies, the USFS, academia, the timber industry, and the building and housing industries. The Coalition will be working with Task Force leadership to develop a concrete strategy to finally meet California's goals of advancing the production and use of mass timber products statewide.

The Draft Plan also includes strategies for workforce development, prescribed fire and grazing utilization, and community wildfire preparedness. RCRC has been working with the California Fire Safe Councils to strengthen the Wildfire County Coordinators Program and build on those efforts for additional community assistance. The Draft Plan also addresses redundancies in both the California Vegetation Treatment Program (CalVTP) and the timber harvest plan process, noting that both need to be updated and streamlined.

RCRC provided preliminary comments on the document prior to its public release in our capacity as members of the Task Force Executive Team. Public comments were due on August 7, 2026.

Senate Bill 143 Sheepherders and Goat Herders Parity

The Legislature passed SB 143 in 2023, including Section 20, which amended Labor Code Section 2695.4 to clarify that the same minimum monthly wage and labor protections for sheepherders should apply to goat herders and herders caring for both types of animals. However, SB 143 also included a sunset provision that has now terminated this parity on July 1, 2026. The bill also directed the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) to report to the Legislature by January 1, 2026 on the employment of sheep and goat herders.

The DIR study was released on March 30, 2026 and confirmed that sheepherders, goat herders and workers that shepherd both animals should have parity in wage requirements. However, the Legislature has yet to act on an extension of SB 143 or a permanent solution, immediately driving up goat herding wages and rendering the practice untenable for prescribed grazing for wildfire prevention.

RCRC is working with a broad coalition of stakeholders, including the California Farm Bureau, the California Climate and Agriculture Network (CalCAN), and CSAC to advocate for a solution in upcoming budget trailer bill discussions. (Attachment 1) RCRC has met with members of the Legislature and the Administration to address this important issue.

State Wildfire Mitigation and Forest Resilience Funding

California's commitment to fund local wildfire and forest mitigation programs is hanging by a thread, as recent actions taken by the California Air Resources Board (CARB) threaten to diminish revenues from the Cap-and-Invest program. In late May, CARB adopted regulations recasting requirements for certain sectors under the program, including oil refiners and other fuel-related industries. The new regulations will necessarily decrease the amount of revenue from the program by easing requirements for those industries to purchase carbon credits.

In 2018, several stakeholders worked to secure a commitment from the Legislature to invest $200 million annually from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF), which is funded by the state's carbon auction. Last year, the Legislature reauthorized and extended the program, instituting a tiered funding system for the GGRF. Despite their earlier commitment, forest resilience and wildfire mitigation programs were deprioritized to the last funding tier. Analysts expect funding from the GGRF for these programs to disappear by the 2029-30 budget year.

RCRC is engaged with a broad group of stakeholders to advocate for protection of these funds, and reprioritization of forest health programs (Attachment 2). The Senate has halted progress on the Cap-and-Invest expenditure plan to work on reassessing how funding tiers are prioritized.

U.S. Wildland Fire Service

After a January 2026 launch, the U.S. Wildland Fire Service (USWFS) has activated fire suppression actions and has been providing response to high severity wildfires nationwide. While coordination with state and local fire response agencies was slow during the development of the USWFS, California has been providing mutual aid for fires on national forest system lands throughout the year, as well as deploying firefighting forces to Oregon, Washington, and Colorado, all of which are experiencing devastating wildfires in 2026.

Wildfire Mitigation Legislation

RCRC remains engaged in several active bills related to forest resilience and wildfire mitigation. A few bills of note include:

- Senate Bill 899 (Grove): SB 899 would require the Governor's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force to work with the California Department of Public Health to undertake an assessment of the impacts of wildfire smoke on public health. The RCRC co-sponsored SB 899 is currently awaiting action in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.
- Senate Bill 877 (Perez): SB 877 would enhance transparency by insurance companies after a policyholder suffers a loss. The RCRC-supported SB 877 awaits action in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.
- Senate Bill 894 (Allen): SB 894 would establish a low-interest loan program for homeowners to implement home hardening strategies. The RCRC-supported SB 894 awaits action in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.
- Senate Bill 973 (Becker): SB 973 codifies the Wildfire County Coordinator Program, administered by the California Fire Safe Councils, and provides oversight

and technical assistance through CAL FIRE. The RCRC-supported SB 973 awaits action in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

- Senate Bill 1370 (Stern): SB 1370 seeks to streamline regulatory review for certain wildfire mitigation projects. The RCRC-supported SB 1370 awaits action in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.
- Assembly Bill 35 (Alvarez): AB 35 removes technical barriers to allow state departments to issue grant funds from the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024, also known as the Climate Bond. The RCRC-supported AB 35 was recently signed by Governor Gavin Newsom.
- Assembly Bill 441 (Hadwick): AB 441 would extend the California Wildfire Mitigation Program, which assists homeowners with wildfire retrofits, through January 1, 2030.
- Assembly Bill 442 (Hadwick): AB 442 would allow a land manager to use a single timber harvest plan (THP) for a wildfire mitigation project that spans multiple watersheds. Currently, a THP must be submitted for each separate watershed, even if the landscape is contiguous.  The RCRC-supported AB 442 has passed the Senate and awaits concurrence in the Assembly.
- Assembly Bill 2724 (Bauer-Kahan): AB 2724 requires the California Department of Insurance to review and update “distressed areas” as defined under the state’s catastrophe model regulations. The RCRC-supported AB 2724 awaits action in the Senate Appropriations Committee.
- S. 1492, the Fix Our Forests Act: The Fix Our Forests Act would expand several federal tools for forest management work, including streamlining environmental review under NEPA and expanding the ability of the USDA Forest Service to enter into contracts and agreements with other parties. Many provisions contained in the bill were included in the proposed Farm Bill; however, the Farm Bill has stalled pending negotiations reopening in September. The RCRC-supported measure passed the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.
- H.R. 1105, the Disaster Resiliency and Coverage Act of 2025: The Disaster Resiliency and Coverage Act of 2025 would amend the Stafford Act to establish a household retrofit and disaster mitigation program as well as provide suggested incentives to insurance providers who offer coverage to wildfire-hardened homes. The RCRC-supported measure was re-introduced by Congressmember Mike Thompson (D-Napa).

California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force
The next Task Force convening will take place on October 1-2, 2026 in Humboldt County at the Bear River Recreation Center in Loleta, CA. Supervisor Anne Cottrell, Napa County, is representing RCRC on the Task Force Executive Team in 2026. See the Task Force website for more details. https://wildfiretaskforce.org/meetings/

**Staff Recommendation**
RCRC will continue to update the RCRC Board of Directors on the state’s activities on forest health and wildfire prevention as the Administration and Legislature continue to finalize their plans beyond 2026.

## Attachments

- Sheep-Goat Herder Parity Coalition Letter, Dated August 6, 2026
- Wildfire Resilience Funding Coalition Letter, Dated August 4, 2026

CSAC

RCRC
RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES OF CALIFORNIA

LEAGUE OF CALIFORNIA CITIES

CSDA

California Special Districts Association
Districts Stronger Together

California Wool Growers Association

Santa Clara County Firefighters
IAFF Local 1165

The Nature Conservancy

CAL-IPC

Non-Toxic Neighborhoods

CPR
Californians For Pesticide Reform
Californianos para la Reforma de los Pesticidas

Southern Marin Fire

MARIN WILDFIRE PREVENTION AUTHORITY

SLEEPY HOLLOW FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
EST. 1949

Community Environmental Council
Bold Climate Action
Acción Climática Audaz

CAFF
COMMUNITY ALLIANCE with FAMILY FARMERS

CalCAN
CALIFORNIA CLIMATE & AGRICULTURE NETWORK

the climate center

Channel Islands Restoration

PACIFIC FOREST TRUST

FireSafe COUNCIL OJAI VALLEY

EHL

OPEN SPACE AUTHORITY
SANTA CLARA VALLEY

PAN
PESTICIDE ACTION & AGROECOLOGY NETWORK

CALIFORNIA RANGELAND Trust

RANGELAND CONSERVATION SCIENCE

175
SAN DOMENICO
Rooted for the Future

NFL
NISEI FARMERS LEAGUE
Growers Looking Out for Growers and Farm Workers

American Farmland Trust

Carbon Cycle Institute

CALIFORNIA RANGELAND CONSERVATION COALITION

SHEPHERDESS LAND & LIVESTOCK

GREEN GOAT LANDSCAPERS

STAR CREEK LAND STEWARDS

CAPRA
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES CORP
EST 2017

Full Circle Wool

INDART SOLAR SHEEP GRAZING

GRAZING SCHOOL OF THE WEST

WILD OAT HOLLOW

TOMKAT RANCH

FIBERSHED

Certified CCOF Organic

AFRICAN AMERICAN FARMERS OF CALIFORNIA

Agricultural Council of California

SAGE ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP

Blue Tent Farms

Merced County Farm Bureau

MADERA COUNTY FARM BUREAU

California Farm Bureau
Standing up for all farmers and ranchers

Fresno County Farm Bureau
Serving agriculture since 1917

STANISLAUS COUNTY FARM BUREAU

Farm Bureau Monterey

SCFB
SACRAMENTO COUNTY FARM BUREAU

CALIFORNIA GRAIN & FEED ASSOCIATION

August 6, 2026

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

The Hon. John Laird, Chair
California Senate Budget Committee
1020 N Street, Room 502
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Hon. Robert Rivas, Speaker
California Assembly
1021 O Street, Suite 8330
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Hon. Monique Limon,
President pro Tempore
1021 O Street, Suite 8518
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Hon. Jesse Gabriel, Chair
California Assembly Budget Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 8230
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom, Speaker Rivas, President pro Tempore Limon, Assembly Budget Committee Chair Gabriel, and Senate Budget Committee Chair Laird:

On behalf of the undersigned agricultural, environmental, local government, firefighting, climate, and environmental justice organizations, we write to request your support for maintaining wage parity for sheep and goat herders in California, which is necessary to maintain the wildfire risk reduction services goats provide throughout the state.

The Legislature passed SB 143 in 2023, including Section 20, which amended Labor Code Section 2695.4 to clarify that the same minimum monthly wage and labor protections for sheep herders should apply to goat herders and herders caring for both types of animals. However, SB 143 also included a sunset provision that terminated this parity on July 1, 2026 and directed the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) to report to the Legislature by January 1, 2026 on the employment of sheep and goat herders.

The DIR report was published on March 30, 2026, and finds that **"Stakeholders [ranchers, herders, and worker advocates] agreed that the same alternative minimum monthly wage should apply to sheep and goat herders** because the workers and work are similar and often overlap."

**We request the legislature and administration work together to maintain sheep and goat herder wage parity and worker protections by restoring the language applicable to goat herders that expired on July 1, 2026**. Failure to do so will result in the sale or slaughter of tens of thousands of sheep and goats and the loss of the weed abatement and wildfire fuels reductions services they provide in California.

**Additional Background**

For the prior quarter century, California wage-and-hour law allowed livestock producers to pay a minimum monthly wage for herders because counting their hours as if they were working twenty four hours a day, seven days a week would have resulted in uneconomically high compensation for these employees, rendering sheep and goat production in California economically impractical. The Legislature recognized that herders work intermittently throughout the day and accordingly provided for the minimum monthly wage.

When AB 1066 (Gonzalez, 2016), legislation requiring payment of daily and weekly overtime to agricultural employees, was phasing in, DIR realized that existing regulations (Section 4(e) of Wage Order 14) included specific reference to sheep but not goats. DIR interpreted this omission to mean that goat herders were not covered by the same minimum monthly wage as sheep herders. DIR's interpretation created an outcome where goat herders would have to be paid nearly four times the $4938 minimum monthly wage for sheep herders.

Had the Legislature not provided parity for minimum monthly wages for sheep and goat herders through SB 143 in 2023, their employers would have faced an unworkable situation. Both sheep and goats would have become unavailable for the increasingly popular practice of prescribed grazing for wildfire fuels reduction (as an alternative to pesticides and fossil-fuel powered machinery). This would have become economically impossible as no homeowners' association, fire safe council, local park, or utility could afford to pay for grazing services at the prices high wages for goat herders would require.

Since SB 143 was passed in 2023, the legislature and administration have recognized the benefits of prescribed grazing in multiple ways. In 2024, the administration published nature-based climate solutions targets, which included prescribed grazing. Later that year, the legislature unanimously passed and the Governor signed SB 675 (Limón), which required prescribed grazing to be incorporated into the state's wildfire resilience strategy. In 2025, the Task Force established a Prescribed Grazing Work Group, which published a brief on expanding prescribed grazing for wildfire resilience in California.

The Department of Industrial Relations delivered its required report on March 30, 2026, which found no significant abuse or mistreatment of sheep and goat herders. It also did not document any objections from herders or farmworker advocates for continuation of wage parity for sheep and goat herders. Unfortunately, the late timing of the delivery of the report left the Legislature little time to deal with the July 1, 2026 sunset on wage parity and the goat herder language expired as of that date.

We urge you to act expeditiously to ensure ongoing parity between the wages of sheep and goat herders, and the continuing availability of sheep and goats for wildfire fuels reduction, by restoring the language applicable to goat herders that expired on July 1, 2026.

Thank you,

Brian Shobe
Policy Director
California Climate and Agriculture Network

Jordan Wells
Legislative Advocate
California State Association of Counties

Staci Heaton
Senior Policy Advocate
Rural County Representatives of California

Johnnie Pina
Legislative Advocate
League of California Cities

Aaron Avery
Director of State Legislative Affairs
California Special Districts Association

Anthony Fletcher
President
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IAFF Local 1165

Christopher Danch
Executive Director
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Mark Brown
Executive Director
Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority

Tom Welch
Interim Fire Chief
Southern Marin Fire District

Richard Shortall
President
Sleepy Hollow Fire Protection District

Dan Silver
Executive Director
Endangered Habitats League

Michael Jarred
Associate Director
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Californians for Pesticide Reform

Sakereh Maskal (she/her)
Policy and Advocacy Lead
Pesticide Action & Agroecology Network
(PAN)

Kim Konte
Founder
Non-Toxic Neighborhoods

Karen Sweet
Executive Director
California Rangeland Conservation
Coalition

Paul Mason
Vice President, Policy & Incentives
Pacific Forest Trust

Baani Behniwal
Carbon Drawdown Director
The Climate Center

Torri Estrada
Executive Director and Director of Policy
Carbon Cycle Institute

Em Johnson
Director of Climate Programs
Community Environmental Council

Ken Owen
Executive Director
Channel Islands Restoration

Lawrence D. Ford, Ph.D.
Principal and Senior Rangeland Conservation Scientist
Rangeland Conservation Science

Phil Esnoz
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California Woolgrowers Association

Jamie Fanous
Policy & Organizing Director
Community Alliance with Family Farmers

Emily Rooney
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Agricultural Council of California

C. Bryan Little
Senior Director, Policy Advocacy
California Farm Bureau

Norm Groot
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Monterey County Farm Bureau

Ryan Jacobsen
CEO
Fresno County Farm Bureau

Walt Hardesty
President
Sacramento County Farm Bureau

Christina Beckstead
Executive Director
Madera County Farm Bureau

Daniel Suenram
President
Lake County Farm Bureau

Caitie Diemel
Executive Director
Stanislaus County Farm Bureau

Manuel Cunha Jr
President
Nisei Farmers League

Breanne Vandenberg
Executive Director
Merced County Farm Bureau

Shirley Rowe
President
African American Farmers of California

Chelsea Gazillo
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Fibershed

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Policy Manager
California Certified Organic Farmers

Chris Zanobini
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California Grain & Feed Association

Andrée Soares
Owner
Star Creek Land Stewards

Alissa Cope and Carson Helton
Sage Environmental Group
Goat Grazing

Tim Arrowsmith
Owner
Blue Tent Farm dba Western Grazers

Cole Bush
Owner
Shepherdess Land and Livestock Co. &
Grazing School of the West

Wendy Millet
Ranch Director
TomKat Ranch

Clayton Hodges
Owner
Paradise Grazing Company

Ryan Indart
President and CEO
Indart Group, Inc.

Sarah Keiser
CEO
Wild Oat Hollow

Beth Reynolds
Owner/operator
The Goat Girls LLC

Paul Abess
Shareholder
Capra Environmental Services, Corp.

Brian Allen & Daniel Allen
Owners
Green Goat Landscapers

James Burns
Marinview Community Association Board
Mill Valley, California

Natasha Hunt
Alcalde Ranch
Coalinga, California

James Kasper
Private Landowner in Marin County

John Campbell
Construction Project Manager
San Domenico School

Patti Wick
2017 Tubbs Fire Survivor
Santa Rosa, CA

Cc: The Hon. Karen Ross, Secretary, Department of Food and Agriculture
The Hon. Stewart Knox, Secretary, Labor & Workforce Development Agency
The Hon. David J. Tangipa, Vice Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
The Hon. Roger Niello, Vice Chair, Senate Budget Committee

# Establishing an Ongoing Funding Source for Wildfire Resilience

August 4th, 2026

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

The Honorable Monique Limón
President pro Tempore
California State Senate
1021 O Street, Suite 8518
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Robert Rivas
Speaker
California State Assembly
1021 O Street, Suite 8330
Sacramento, CA 95814

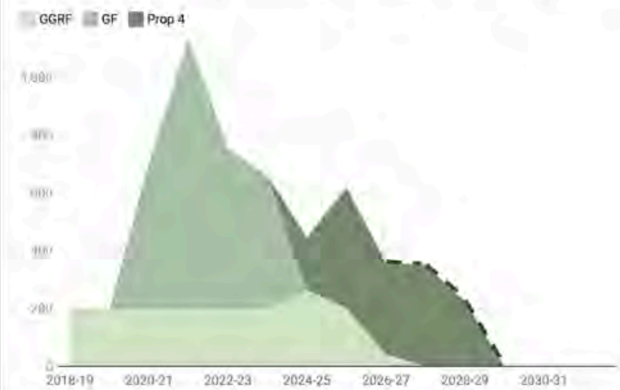
**RE: Establishing an Ongoing Funding Source for Wildfire Resilience**

Dear Governor Newsom, Pro Tem Limón, and Speaker Rivas:

The undersigned urge you to act now to address a looming cliff in California's wildfire resilience funding by restoring a dedicated, stable, and ongoing funding source to reduce the risk to our communities and iconic landscapes. Since 2018, the state has relied on significant, reliable funding from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) for CAL FIRE's wildfire prevention and mitigation programs, supplemented more recently by Prop 4 dollars and General Fund windfalls. However, last year's action to restructure the GGRF expenditure plan moved wildfire preparedness funding from a top funding priority into Tier 3, the lowest priority, where **the latest Department of Finance projections show only $38 million available for wildfire and forest resilience programs, less than a fifth of what was previously dedicated.** Additionally, Prop 4 dollars for wildfire are expected to be fully allocated no later than 2028-29. The result is that California will soon have little-to-no reliable, ongoing funding for wildfire resilience and ongoing wildfire resilience efforts will be dramatically scaled back or ended.

These diminishing projections of wildfire funding from GGRF arrive as the Administration and legislative leaders are negotiating major wildfire policy changes building on the SB 254 Natural Catastrophe Resiliency Study. These conversations need to include stabilizing the funding for state wildfire risk reduction efforts. The core of the state's wildfire problem is the dramatically increased risk – this drives increased insurance premiums and utility rates, greater losses, and the existential fear of fire that impacts California. Only sustained mitigation efforts can address this underlying condition. As the SB 254 report states, "Failure to act, or a conscious decision not to act, on risk reduction…will have large near-term and severe long-term adverse consequences for Californians."

**State Wildfire Resilience Funding by Source 2018-2031 (mil)**




**Note:** $38M in GGRF funding for FY 26-27 reflects updated Dept of Finance projection and assumes the updated cap and invest regulations are in effect for the February auction. We assume inadequate GGRF to support "Tier Three" programs in future years. The remaining Prop 4 funding assumes allocation across FY 27-29 to allow a ramp down of state wildfire risk reduction investments.

This funding cliff exists even though wildfire is Californians' top environmental concern, according to a July 2026 PPIC statewide poll, and as the state is releasing an updated plan for addressing the enormous scale of the challenge. The draft Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan calls for treating about one million acres annually through prescribed fire, thinning, and reforestation, alongside community investments like defensible space, home hardening, and evacuation improvements. Executing the necessary scope of work will total billions of dollars from state, local, and private sources.

Since 2019 the state has been the backbone of wildfire mitigation efforts, investing an average of $590 million annually. Once the remainder of Prop 4 is allocated in the coming year or two and mitigation funding drops to zero there will be real and lasting consequences - both for our communities and for the long-term economic liabilities caused by decades of deferred action on wildfire. California will lose the momentum it has built over the past decade, pulling the rug out from under the local governments, organizations, and businesses that have invested in the equipment, staff, and capacity to execute this work at scale. If that implementation capacity is lost, it will be extremely difficult to rebuild. Organizations that grew to meet the state's wildfire resilience goals, only to have that funding pulled out from under them, will likely be reluctant to make that investment again.

California cannot address a worsening wildfire crisis without a predictable, ongoing source of funding that can support multi-year efforts. Voters strongly support investing in wildfire preparedness and understand that investing proactively will save the state billions by helping to prevent the disastrous megafires we've lived through in recent years. **We urge the Legislature and the Administration to restore a stable, ongoing funding source for wildfire resilience, whether by restoring GGRF wildfire**

**funding as a high priority or through a new mechanism.** Restoring that stability is essential to protecting communities, sustaining healthy landscapes, and managing the state's long-term wildfire risk.

Sincerely,

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Vice President, Policy & Incentives
**Pacific Forest Trust**

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CEO
**All Hands Ecology**

Mac Cloyes
Managing Director of Government Relations
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**California State Association of Countries**

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California Program Director
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Coordinator
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Founder and CEO
**FireWERX**

Tracy Katelman
RPF #2483
**ForEverGreen Forestry**

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Executive Director
**Mattole Restoration Council**

Jay Balagna
California Policy Advisor
**Megafire Action**

Matthew Baker
Policy Director
**Planning and Conservation League**

Molly Bartlett
Managing Director
**Resilience Force**

Staci Heaton
Senior Policy Advocate
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Sophia Marquez
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Haddee Hammoud
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**Santa Monica Mountains Fire Safe Council**

Steve Frisch
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**Sierra Business Council**

Mercedes Macias Aguilar
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**Sierra Club California**

Jenny Hatch
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**Sierra Nevada Alliance**

Lily Bui, PhD
Director of Climate and Disaster Resilience
**SoCal Grantmakers**

Christopher Rose
Executive Director
**Solano Resource Conservation District**

Christine Kuehn
Executive Director
**Sonoma Resource Conservation District**

Steve Pye
Principal, CARX
**Spye Conservation Inc.**

Baani Behniwal
Carbon Drawdown Director
**The Climate Center**

Magdalena Valderrama
Operations Director
**The Seigler Springs Community Redevelopment Association**

Lindsay Dailey
Executive Director
**Tribal EcoRestoration Alliance**

Mark Toney
Executive Director
**The Utility Reform Network**

Nick Goulette
Co-Executive Director
**Watershed Research and Training Center**

Karin Umfrey
Managing Attorney & Policy Advocacy Director
**Worksafe**

Patrick Koepele
Executive Director
**Yosemite Rivers Alliance**

**Individuals (affiliation for identification purposes only):**
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Andrea Williams (Environmental Stewardship & Management Branch Chief)
Annie Madden (Prescribed Fire Squad Lead)
Gabriel Albarian Jr (Regional Firewise Coordinator)
Michael Wara (Director of the Climate and Energy Policy Program at Stanford University)

**To:** Members of the RCRC Board of Directors

**From:** Eric Will, Policy Advocate

**Date:** August 4, 2026

**Re:** Water Issues Update – **Informational Item**

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## 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 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. DWR increased the allocation to 30 percent on January 29, 2026, and again to 45 percent on May 15, 2026. 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.

The snowpack is just 12 percent of average, peaking in mid-February and has since melted off. Reservoir levels remain high across the state due to precipitation events throughout Spring.

*California Water Plan 2028*

The California Water Plan 2028 was launched in late February, marking a multi-year effort to modernize statewide water planning. This effort is complementary to SB 72 (Caballero, 2025), which also requires DWR to convene an Advisory Committee to develop both the 2028 and 2033 Water Plan. RCRC staff attended the first meeting in the Spring and plan to attend the next meeting at the end of August, which will be held in Monterey Park.

### Federal Update

*Colorado River Basin Operations*

The Bureau of Reclamation released the Final Environmental Impact Statement for future management of Lake Powell and Lake Mead. This framework impacts operations in the Colorado River Basin through 2036 and will be used to develop operating guidelines for both lakes. This Statement would impose severe reductions to water received by California, Nevada, and Arizona.

*Potter Valley Hydroelectric Project*

On July 25, 2025, PG&E filed an application to surrender and decommission the Potter Valley Hydroelectric Project. On October 31, 2025, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) issued a Notice of Application for surrender of license and non-project use of project lands. This notice invited local, state, federal, and tribal entities to file comments regarding environmental issues impacted by the proposal. FERC opened a public participation process earlier in 2026 and has extended the period until Friday, September 18, 2026. Most recently, the Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District attempted to enter the case deciding the dam's fate but was rejected by FERC. The water district has stated an interest in purchasing and operating the dam, but that path is still unclear.

## 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.

REPRESENTING CALIFORNIA'S RURAL COUNTIES

**To:** Members of the Board of Directors

**From:** Milena De Melo, Finance Director

**Date:** August 11, 2026

**Re:** RCRC Revised Pay Rate Schedules – Effective July 1, 2026 - **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 Board of Directors in January 2026.

## Issue

The attached revised schedule incorporates updates resulting from the annual compensation review process, approved salary adjustments, and recent staffing changes. Executive Committee's approval of the revised Pay Rate Schedule will ensure our records remain current and compliant with CalPERS' requirements.

At the July 29 meeting, the Executive Committee reviewed and approved the revised pay rate schedules, which are now being presented to the RCRC Board of Directors for review and approval.

## Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the RCRC Board of Directors approve the revised pay rate schedule, effective July 1, 2026.

## Attachments

- RCRC Pay Schedule – Effective July 1, 2026 (Clean)
- RCRC Pay Schedule – Effective July 1, 2026 (Track Changes)

Attachment A

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

| Position/Title | Payrate Minimum | Payrate Maximum | Time Base |
|---|---|---|---|
| President/CEO | $295,000 | $525,500 | Annual |
| Senior Vice President | $235,000 | $485,000 | Annual |
| General Counsel | $165,000 | $375,000 | Annual |
| Chief Economic Development Officer | $165,000 | $330,000 | Annual |
| Finance Director | $165,000 | $310,000 | Annual |
| Senior Policy Advocate | $160,000 | $295,000 | Annual |
| Vice President of Economic Development * | $145,000 | $290,000 | Annual |
| Vice President of Business Development | $175,000 | $280,000 | Annual |
| Deputy General Counsel | $140,000 | $275,000 | Annual |
| Operations Lead / GSCA COO * | $180,000 | $275,000 | Annual |
| Outside Plant (OSP) Construction Management Lead | $180,000 | $260,000 | Annual |
| Director of Data Management | $125,000 | $260,000 | Annual |
| Policy Advocate | $115,000 | $235,000 | Annual |
| IT Director | $150,000 | $230,000 | Annual |
| Communications Director | $133,000 | $197,000 | Annual |
| Economic Development Officer | $ 80,000 | $190,000 | Annual |
| Director of Marketing and Stakeholder Relations | $ 85,000 | $190,000 | Annual |
| Director of Forest Resiliency | $125,000 | $225,000 | Annual |
| Director of Board Operations | $ 88,000 | $180,000 | Annual |
| Project Accountant ** | $120,000 | $165,000 | Annual |
| Government Affairs Operations Manager | $100,000 | $165,000 | Annual |
| Accounting Manager | $ 82,000 | $165,000 | Annual |
| Senior Program Administrator/Trainer | $ 78,000 | $133,000 | Annual |
| Program Administrator | $ 66,000 | $121,000 | Annual |
| Program Operations Analyst *** | $ 65,000 | $120,000 | Annual |
| Government Affairs Policy Analyst | $ 75,000 | $110,000 | Annual |
| Management Analyst | $ 50,000 | $100,000 | Annual |
| Client Relations Representative | $ 26.00 | $ 57.00 | Hourly |
| Accountant | $ 31.00 | $ 62.00 | Hourly |
| Office Manager | $ 24.00 | $ 41.00 | Hourly |

* Change in title only. Not a new position.

** Position of Financial Planning and Administration Lead was eliminated and replaced with Project Accountant.

*** New position added as a result of promotion for an existing staff.

Attachment A~~.2~~

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

| Position/Title | Payrate Minimum | Payrate Maximum | Time Base |
|---|---|---|---|
| President/CEO | $295,000 | $525,500 | Annual |
| Senior Vice President | $235,000 | $~~465~~485,000 | Annual |
| General Counsel | $165,000 | $375,000 | Annual |
| Chief Economic Development Officer | $165,000 | $330,000 | Annual |
| Finance Director | $165,000 | $310,000 | Annual |
| Senior Policy Advocate | $160,000 | $295,000 | Annual |
| ~~Deputy Chief~~ Vice President of Economic Development ~~Officer~~* | $145,000 | $290,000 | Annual |
| Vice President of Business Development | $175,000 | $~~275~~280,000 | Annual |
| Deputy General Counsel | $140,000 | $275,000 | Annual |
| Operations Lead / GSCA COO * | $180,000 | $~~260~~275,000 | Annual |
| Outside Plant (OSP) Construction Management Lead | $180,000 | $260,000 | Annual |
| Director of Data Management | $125,000 | $260,000 | Annual |
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| Economic Development Officer | $ 80,000 | $190,000 | Annual |
| Director of Marketing and Stakeholder Relations | $ 85,000 | $~~165~~190,000 | Annual |
| Director of Forest Resiliency | $125,000 | $225,000 | Annual |
| Director of Board Operations | $ 88,000 | $180,000 | Annual |
| Project Accountant ** | $120,000 | $165,000 | Annual |
| ~~Financial Planning and Administration Lead~~ | ~~$130,000~~ | ~~$185,000~~ | ~~Annual~~ |
| Government Affairs Operations Manager | $100,000 | $165,000 | Annual |
| Accounting Manager | $ 82,000 | $165,000 | Annual |
| Senior Program Administrator/Trainer | $ 78,000 | $133,000 | Annual |
| Program Administrator | $ 66,000 | $121,000 | Annual |
| Program Operations Analyst *** | $ 65,000 | $120,000 | Annual |
| Government Affairs Policy Analyst ** | $ 75,000 | $110,000 | Annual |
| Management Analyst | $ 50,000 | $100,000 | Annual |
| Client Relations Representative | $ 26.00 | $ 57.00 | Hourly |
| Accountant | $ 31.00 | $ ~~58~~62.00 | Hourly |
| Office Manager | $ 24.00 | $ 41.00 | Hourly |

* Change in title only. Not a new position.

Attachment A~~.2~~

** ~~New position added.~~Position of Financial Planning and Administration Lead was eliminated and replaced with Project Accountant.

*** New position added as a result of promotion for an existing staff.

**RCRC**

**REPRESENTING CALIFORNIA'S RURAL COUNTIES**

**To:** Members of RCRC Board of Directors

**From:** Milena De Melo, Finance Director

**Date:** August 11, 2026

**Re:** Proposed 2026 RCRC Revised Operating Budget - **ACTION**

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In December 2025, the Rural County Representatives of California ("RCRC") Board of Directors approved the 2026 Operating Budget (Attachment A). The proposed revised 2026 Operating Budget reflects an increase in total revenues of $150,000 and total expenditures of $205,000. The proposed revisions are intended to align the budget with Board-approved initiatives and anticipated operating costs for the remainder of the fiscal year. As a result of these revisions, projected net revenue over expenditure decreases from $222,520 to $167,520. Despite this reduction, the RCRC continues to project positive operating results and positive cash flow for the year.

At the July 29 meeting, the Executive Committee reviewed and approved the 2026 RCRC revised operating budget, which are now being presented to the RCRC Board of Directors for review and approval.

**Background – 2026 Proposed RCRC Budget Revision**

The Proposed 2026 RCRC Revised Operating Budget (Attachment A) includes total revenues of $18,295,650 and proposed expenditures of $18,128,130. The proposed changes to the budget include the following:

- **Miscellaneous income:** Miscellaneous income is budgeted to increase by $150,000, primarily due to RCRC's administration of the Sierra Business Council's California Jobs First grant, awarded in November 2025. The grant provides reimbursement for eligible consultant costs and administrative funding to recover staff time associated with managing and overseeing the program.
- **Consultants:** The consultants' budget has been increased by $205,000. The majority of this increase reflects consulting costs associated with RCRC's administration of the Sierra Business Council's California Jobs First grant. The budget also includes funding for consulting services to support strategic priorities, including external stakeholder engagement and intergovernmental coordination aligned with RCRC's Strategic Plan.
- **Legal fees:** The legal fees budget has been increased by $150,000 to provide sufficient funding for anticipated legal services associated with two separate litigation initiatives approved by the Board at its June 2026 meeting.

- **Pension expense:** Pension expense is budgeted to decrease by $200,000. Based on the most recent actuarial valuation, RCRC's pension plan is fully funded, resulting in the recognition of a net pension asset. Combined with investment returns on plan assets exceeding 14% during the current fiscal year, RCRC's proportionate share of the plan's pension obligation is expected to decrease, thus lowering our expense.
- **Travel - board member reimbursement:** The Board member travel reimbursement budget has been increased by $50,000 to better reflect expected Board travel requirements through the remainder of the year.

**RCRC Net Financial Impact**

The proposed revised budget projects net cash flow of $167,520 reflecting a $55,000 reduction from the net cash flow projected in the original 2026 budget. Despite the modest reduction, RCRC continues to project positive operating results and positive cash flow for the year. Accordingly, the revised budget does not anticipate the use of the RCRC's contingency reserves.

**Staff Recommendations**

Staff recommends that the RCRC Board of Directors approve the attached proposed 2026 RCRC Revised Operating Budget (Attachment A).

**Attachment**

- 2026 RCRC Operating Budget – Revised (Attachment A)

**RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES OF CALIFORNIA**
**Operating Budget - REVISED**
**For the Year Ended December 31, 2026**

| | 2026 Revised Budget | 2026 Original Budget | Change Increase / (Decrease) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Revenue:** | | | |
| Member county dues | 327,000 | $ 327,000 | $ - |
| Annual meeting sponsorship / registration fees | 290,000 | 290,000 | - |
| Contract support services fee: | | | |
| Golden State Finance Authority (GSFA) | 4,369,000 | 4,369,000 | - |
| National Homebuyers Fund, Inc. (NHF) | 4,305,000 | 4,305,000 | - |
| Rural Counties Environmental Services JPA (ESJPA) | 311,000 | 311,000 | - |
| Golden State Natural Resources (GSNR) | 1,574,000 | 1,574,000 | - |
| Rural Alliance Inc. (RAI) | 169,800 | 169,800 | - |
| Golden State Connect Authority (GSCA) | 3,224,250 | 3,224,250 | - |
| Contract performance fee from GSFA | 1,000,000 | 1,000,000 | - |
| Excess resources from NHF | 2,000,000 | 2,000,000 | - |
| Interest and dividend income on cash and investments | 300,000 | 300,000 | - |
| Investment gain/(loss) | 25,000 | 25,000 | - |
| Miscellaneous income | 160,000 | 10,000 | 150,000 |
| Other income | 240,600 | 240,600 | - |
| **Total Revenue** | **18,295,650** | **$ 18,145,650** | **$ 150,000** |
| | | | |
| **Expenditures:** | | | |
| Accounting and auditing | 26,000 | $ 26,000 | $ - |
| Annual installation reception | 38,000 | 38,000 | - |
| Annual county of the chair meeting | 55,000 | 55,000 | - |
| Bank fees | 10,000 | 10,000 | - |
| Bill services | 1,000 | 1,000 | - |
| Communications/public relations | 45,500 | 45,500 | - |
| Community relations | 50,000 | 50,000 | - |
| Computer maintenance and support | 268,700 | 268,700 | - |
| Computer hardware | 100,000 | 100,000 | - |
| Conference - annual meeting | 450,000 | 450,000 | - |
| Conferences attended by staff | 52,000 | 52,000 | - |
| Consultants | 887,700 | 682,700 | 205,000 |
| In-kind donated services: ESJPA | 165,000 | 165,000 | - |
| In-kind donated services: GSCA | 2,032,000 | 2,032,000 | - |
| In-kind donated services: RAI | 174,800 | 174,800 | - |
| In-kind donated services: GSNR | 1,588,000 | 1,588,000 | - |
| Depreciation | 125,000 | 125,000 | - |
| Dues, fees and subscriptions | 83,650 | 83,650 | - |
| Employee training | 48,850 | 48,850 | - |
| Reference library and publications | 16,700 | 16,700 | - |
| Equipment lease | 20,000 | 20,000 | - |
| Insurance | 96,000 | 96,000 | - |
| Interest expense | 175,200 | 175,200 | - |
| Internet services | 49,200 | 49,200 | - |
| Lease amortization | 497,000 | 497,000 | - |
| Legal fees | 285,000 | 135,000 | 150,000 |
| Lobbyist fees | 1,000 | 1,000 | - |
| Meetings | 50,000 | 50,000 | - |
| Miscellaneous | 23,700 | 23,700 | - |
| Office expenses | 60,000 | 60,000 | - |
| Off-site storage | 16,500 | 16,500 | - |
| Payroll | 7,402,000 | 7,402,000 | - |
| Payroll taxes and employee benefits | 1,897,000 | 1,897,000 | - |
| Pension expense | 650,000 | 850,000 | (200,000) |
| Other post employment benefits (OPEB) | 120,000 | 120,000 | - |
| Payroll processing fees | 10,000 | 10,000 | - |
| Postage | 7,000 | 7,000 | - |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Printing and duplication | 3,500 | 3,500 | - |
| Repairs and maintenance | 3,050 | 3,050 | - |
| Employee relations | 20,000 | 20,000 | - |
| Fees, taxes and licenses | 5,000 | 5,000 | - |
| Sponsorships | 97,500 | 97,500 | - |
| Sponsorships - disaster/other assistance | 100,000 | 100,000 | - |
| Telephone | 21,880 | 21,880 | - |
| Travel - board member reimbursement | 175,000 | 125,000 | 50,000 |
| Travel | 124,700 | 124,700 | - |
| **Total Expenditures** | **18,128,130** | **$ 17,923,130** | **$ 205,000** |
| **Net Revenue over Expenditures** | **167,520** | **$ 222,520** | **$ (55,000)** |
| | | | |
| **Noncash adjustments:** | | | |
| OPEB change in liability | 55,000 | $ 55,000 | $ - |
| Pension Plan chanage in liability | 650,000 | $ 850,000 | $ (200,000) |
| Depreciation | 125,000 | $ 125,000 | $ - |
| Investment gain | (25,000) | $ (25,000) | $ - |
| **Projected net cash flow** | **972,520** | **$ 1,227,520** | **$ (255,000)** |

# Legislative Matters

REPRESENTING CALIFORNIA'S
RURAL COUNTIES

**To:** Members of the RCRC Board of Directors

**From:** Sarah Dukett, Senior Policy Advocate

**Date:** August 11, 2026

**Re:** Proposition 43: Local Taxes: Limitations – **ACTION**

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**Summary**

This memo provides an analysis of Local Taxes: Limitations Initiative, Proposition 43, which will appear on the November 2026 General Election ballot for voter consideration. Proposition 43 is a legislatively proposed constitutional amendment (Assembly Constitutional Amendments (ACA) 22) that would change the voter-approval requirements for local special taxes. The Legislature adopted ACA 22 on June 25, 2026, and filed it with the Secretary of State as Resolution Chapter 132, Statutes of 2026. The measure was designated as Proposition 43 and will be submitted to voters at the November 3, 2026 statewide general election.

Beginning January 1, 2027, Proposition 43 would require all local special taxes to receive approval from two-thirds of the voters voting on the tax, regardless of whether the measure is placed on the ballot by a local governing body or through the local initiative process.

The measure would also prohibit a local government, including its electorate acting through the initiative power, from imposing an ad valorem tax on real property except as permitted under existing constitutional provisions.


**Initiative Description**

Proposition 43 would add Section 4.5 to Article XIII A of the California Constitution and make the following changes to local taxation authority.

Beginning January 1, 2027, a local government, including the electorate of a local government exercising the initiative power, could not impose, extend, or increase a special tax unless the tax is submitted to the electorate and approved by a two-thirds vote.

Local government-sponsored special taxes are already subject to two-thirds voter approval under Article XIII C. Proposition 43 would extend that same threshold to special taxes proposed through the voter initiative process, reversing the current judicial interpretation that permits those measures to pass with a simple majority.

Proposition 43 would prohibit a local government, including its electorate acting through the initiative power, from imposing an ad valorem tax on real property except as authorized by paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) of Section 3 of Article XIII D of the California Constitution. This provision clarifies that the existing constitutional limitation applies to both local governing bodies and local voters acting by initiative.

The measure would operate prospectively beginning January 1, 2027. It contains no provision invalidating a tax approved before that date, and does not apply to any taxes proposed on the November 2026 ballot.

**Background**

Proposition 13 and Local Tax Approval Requirements

California's modern local tax framework largely stems from Proposition 13, approved by voters in 1978. Proposition 13 limited property tax rates and established voter approval requirements for local taxes. Specifically, it capped the general ad valorem property tax rate at 1 percent of assessed value, limited annual increases in assessed value, and required two-thirds voter approval for cities, counties, and special districts to impose special taxes.

Proposition 218, approved by voters in 1996, added Articles XIII C and XIII D to the California Constitution. Under Article XIII C, a “local government” may not impose, extend, or increase a special tax without approval by two-thirds of voters. A special tax is defined as any tax imposed for a specific purpose rather than for general governmental use.

Article XIII C also classifies local taxes as either general or special. General taxes used for general governmental purposes generally require majority voter approval. No "local government" may impose, extend, or increase any general tax unless that tax is approved by a simple majority of voters, which must occur at a general election for members of the governing body, unless an emergency is declared by a unanimous vote.

In 2010, the voters adopted Proposition 26, which further expanded the reach of article XIII C's voter approval requirement by broadening the definition of "tax" to include "any levy, charge, or exaction of any kind imposed by a local government," unless it falls within one of seven exempt categories – and placing the burden on the local government to demonstrate "that a levy, charge, or other exaction is not a tax."

Article XIII C also expressly preserves the voters' initiative power to reduce or repeal local taxes, assessments, fees, and charges. More broadly, Article II of the California Constitution reserves the initiative power to the people, and courts have traditionally construed that power broadly.

Court Decisions Affecting Initiative Taxes

Recent court decisions have interpreted these constitutional provisions differently when taxes are proposed through the citizen initiative process rather than by a local government.

*California Cannabis Coalition v. City of Upland*

California Cannabis Coalition v. City of Upland (2017) 3 Cal.5th 924 arose from a local initiative to repeal the city's ban on medical marijuana dispensaries, and impose an annual $75,000 licensing and inspection charge. The City of Upland concluded that because the charge exceeded estimated regulatory costs, it would operate as a general tax and had to appear at a regularly scheduled general election, as required by Article XIII C, rather than the special election requested by the proponents.

The California Supreme Court held that Article XIII C's election-timing requirement for general taxes applied to taxes imposed by a '*local government*' and did not clearly restrict *voters* acting directly through the initiative power. The requirement therefore did not apply to the voter-sponsored initiative. Upland addressed election timing for a voter-initiated general tax, not the approval threshold for a voter-initiated special tax; however, the potential implications of this ruling for Article XIII C's other restrictions on "local government's" taxing powers were widely acknowledged at the time.

*The Current Majority Threshold for Voter-Initiated Special Taxes*
Following Upland, a long line of Court of Appeal decisions, beginning with City and County of San Francisco v. All Persons Interested in the Matter of Proposition C (2020) 51 Cal.App.5th 703, have held that a voter-initiated local special tax may be approved by a simple majority rather than two-thirds of voters. No court has reached the opposition conclusion (although individual justices have occasionally voiced concerns) and the California Supreme Court has consistently declined review, allowing several voter-initiated local special taxes to take effect with majority approval.

Under current law, the approval threshold for a local special tax therefore depends on how the measure reaches the ballot. A governing-body-sponsored special tax requires two-thirds voter approval, while a voter-initiated special tax may pass with a majority. Proposition 43 would eliminate that distinction by applying the two-thirds threshold to both.

*ACA 13 (Ward)*
The measure would have required any state or local initiative measure to conform with any increased voter threshold that it seeks to impose on future ballot measures. For example, if a measure looks to increase the voter threshold of general tax measures from a simple majority (50% +1) to a supermajority (2/3), the measure would be required to pass by that same supermajority. The measure would have also preserved the right of local governments to place advisory questions on the ballot to ask voters their opinion on the issue.

ACA 13 also stated that the provisions of this constitutional amendment apply to all statewide initiative measures submitted to voters on or after January 1, 2024. It contained intent language stating that the provisions of this measure are not intended to reverse or invalidate provisions of the California Constitution in effect before January 1, 2024, including the provisions of Proposition 13 of 1978.

ACA was originally scheduled to be on the March 2024 ballot, but was subsequently moved to the November 2024 ballot, and then again to the November 2026 ballot.

<u>The 2026 Ballot Agreement</u>
Proposition 43 is the product of an agreement between state leaders and the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association (HJTA). In exchange for the Legislature placing ACA 22

before voters and removing ACA 13 from the November ballot, HJTA withdrew its Local Taxpayer Protection Act to Save Proposition 13 (Initiative 25-0006A1).

The Local Taxpayer Protection Act to Save Proposition 13 proposal included a two-thirds requirement for all local special taxes, restrictions on real property transfer taxes, and the retroactive invalidation of certain existing taxes.

Proposition 43 would operate prospectively and would not repeal or reduce existing real property transfer taxes, invalidate existing voter-approved special taxes, limit documentary transfer tax rates, or create a deadline for local governments to eliminate existing taxes. The result is a new constitutional restriction on future local revenue measures by requiring two-thirds approval for voter-initiated special taxes that may pass by majority vote under current law.

**Issue**

Proposition 43 would not directly reduce or eliminate existing county revenues. Current real property transfer taxes, parcel taxes, and other voter-initiated special taxes would remain in effect. Instead, the fiscal impact would occur when future voter-initiated special taxes receive majority support but fall short of the new two-thirds threshold.

The statewide amount of potential foregone revenue cannot be reliably estimated because it would depend on the number, structure, and outcome of future local measures. Proposition 43 could also affect how counties structure future revenue measures. Counties may have greater incentive to pursue general taxes, which remain subject to majority approval, rather than special taxes dedicated to specific purposes. While this would preserve a potential revenue option, voters could not legally restrict those revenues to the specific service or program identified in the measure, potentially making the measure harder to pass and increasing competition for limited county General Fund resources.

The Legislative Analyst issued a fiscal impact statement that states, "Proposition 43 makes it harder for local governments to pass certain taxes. As a result, local governments' tax revenues could be lower in the future than they otherwise would be. The actual revenue impact is unknown and would depend on future decisions by local governments and voters."

Proposition 43 would make significant changes to the constitutional framework governing local taxation. For counties, the primary considerations are the potential impacts on local fiscal flexibility, voter authority, and the ability to secure dedicated funding for essential services.

Applying the same two-thirds approval threshold to all local special taxes would provide greater certainty regarding vote requirements. However, it would also mean that a voter-initiated special tax receiving majority support could still fail, limiting a county's ability to establish dedicated funding for locally identified needs.

The impacts would vary by county but could be particularly significant for counties with limited General Fund capacity, infrastructure needs, or few alternative revenue sources. Counties are responsible for delivering a broad range of state-mandated and essential services, making local revenue flexibility particularly important when existing resources are insufficient to meet community needs.

Proposition 43 also raises a broader policy question about the balance between statewide tax limitations and local voter authority. While the measure would establish a uniform vote threshold, it would also restrict the ability of a majority of local voters to approve taxes dedicated to locally determined priorities. Because this change would be placed in the Constitution, any future modification would require statewide voter approval.

RCRC's Policy Principles do not directly address voter-approval thresholds for local sales taxes or other local tax measures, except to support counties' ability to enact cannabis taxes and to oppose the state's use of resource-based fees to balance the state budget. However, the Policy Principles consistently recognize the importance of local control and preserving counties' ability to make decisions that reflect local needs and priorities. The RCRC Board has historically opposed statewide measures limiting local revenue-raising authority for these reasons, taking an "Oppose" position on both Proposition 26 in 2010 and on the "Tax Fairness, Transparency and Accountability Act of 2018" (a tax limitation initiative sponsored by the California Business Roundtable, which was ultimately removed from the ballot as part of another legislative compromise).

The Board may wish to consider Proposition 43 through this broader local-control lens, including whether imposing a higher voter-approval threshold that would make future special taxes more difficult to enact unduly restricts local fiscal flexibility and voter decision-making. Staff recommends the Board consider these impacts and determine whether the proposed limitations on local special taxes warrant taking a position on Proposition 43.

**Staff Recommendation**

RCRC staff recommends the RCRC Board of Directors consider taking a position on Proposition 43.

**Attachments**

- Copy of Proposition 43
- Proposition 26 Memo
- Board Minutes Excerpt 8-18-2010
- Board Minutes Excerpt 6-20-2018
- Tax Fairness, Transparency and Accountability Act of 2018 Board Memo

RC132

**Assembly Constitutional Amendment No.** 22

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Adopted in Assembly JUN 25 2026

Sue Parker
*Chief Clerk of the Assembly*

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Adopted in Senate JUN 25 2026

*Secretary of the Senate*

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This resolution was received by the Secretary of State this 25th day of June, 2026 at 4:40 o'clock P. M.

*Deputy Secretary of State*

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2025–26 REGULAR SESSION

# Assembly Constitutional Amendment No. 22

## Introduced by Assembly Member Wicks

June 25, 2026

Assembly Constitutional Amendment No. 22—A resolution to propose to the people of the State of California an amendment to the Constitution of the State, by adding Section 4.5 to Article XIII A thereof, relating to taxation.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACA 22, as introduced, Wicks. Local taxes: limitation.

The California Constitution conditions the imposition of a special tax by a local government upon the approval of ⅔ of the voters of the local government voting on that tax, and prohibits these entities from imposing an ad valorem tax on real property or a transactions or sales tax on the sale of real property.

The Supreme Court of California interpreted this provision and other provisions restricting the authority of local governments to impose, extend, or increase taxes as not restricting the authority of voters to impose taxes via initiative.

This measure would, beginning January 1, 2027, prohibit a local government, including the electorate of a local government exercising the initiative power, from imposing, extending, or increasing any special tax, except as provided, unless and until that tax is submitted to the electorate and approved by a ⅔ vote. The measure would prohibit a local government, including the electorate of a local government exercising the initiative power, from imposing ad valorem taxes on real property, except as provided pursuant to specified constitutional provisions.

Vote: ⅔. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: no. State-mandated local program: no.

*Resolved by the Assembly, the Senate concurring,* That the Legislature of the State of California at its 2025–26 Regular Session commencing on the second day of December 2024, two-thirds of the membership of each house concurring, hereby proposes to the people of the State of California, that the Constitution of the State be amended as follows:

That Section 4.5 is added to Article XIII A thereof, to read:

SEC. 4.5. (a) Beginning on January 1, 2027, and notwithstanding Article II and Article XI, no local government, including the electorate of a local government exercising the initiative power, may impose, extend, or increase any special tax, except as provided in Section 4 of this article, subdivision (d) of Section 2 of Article XIII C, and paragraph (2) of subdivision (a) of Section 3 of Article XIII D, unless and until that tax is submitted to the electorate and approved by a two-thirds vote.

(b) Notwithstanding Article II and Article XI, no local government, including the electorate of a local government exercising the initiative power, may impose ad valorem taxes on real property, except as provided in paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) of Section 3 of Article XIII D.

(c) "Local government" and "special tax" shall have the same meaning as provided in Section 1 of Article XIII C.

O

**FILED**
in the office of the Secretary of State
of the State of California

[illegible] 2 5 2026

By ______________________
Deputy Secretary of State

Attest:

______________________
*Secretary of State*

To: RCRC Board of Directors

From: Paul A. Smith
Senior Legislative Advocate

Date: August 10, 2010

Re: **Proposition 26:** Increases the Legislative Vote Requirement to Two-Thirds for Certain State Levies and Charges
**ACTION ITEM**

**Summary**
This memo provides an analysis of Proposition 26 which requires a 2/3rds vote on the imposition of specified "fees".

**Background**
While the impact to the 'payor' may appear the same, 'assessments', 'fees' and 'taxes' all have a legal distinction under California law. Each of these revenue-raising options are a tool used by local governments and can only be levied under certain conditions.

*Fees*
A fee is payment made to an entity for a service directly delivered. For example, in most cities and counties, individuals pay a solid waste disposal fee to cover the costs of disposal in and regulation of solid waste landfills. Or, residents of a jurisdiction pay a monthly wastewater fee to cover the costs of operating a treatment system.

Fees are generally imposed by a majority vote of a local government body or the fee-paying public. Levying and/or increasing a fee usually will trigger a Proposition 218 process, whereby notice of protest must be mailed to those subject to the increase. Provided there are enough protestors, an election can be held.

*Assessments*
An assessment is generally imposed by a local government for a benefit to property or a property owner. For assessments to be legal, they cannot provide a general benefit. Assessments must be approved by the property owners by a majority vote; however, these are weighted votes depending on the scale and size of each property holder. For example, a specific assessment occurs when a jurisdiction needs to replace a waste water line in a subdivision; however, the assessment can only cover the cost of providing the infrastructure to these specific property owners.

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*Taxes*
Taxes can be imposed or raised on a variety of things (sales transactions, property, transient occupancy) and need not be directly related to a benefit received, if any, by the payor. Statewide taxes can be imposed or raised by a 2/3rds vote of the Legislature; however, local taxes can only be imposed or raised by a vote of the local electorate. The vote threshold for imposing or raising a local tax is related to the purpose of the tax. Taxes imposed for a general purpose can be imposed by a majority vote. Taxes imposed for a specific purpose must receive 2/3rds approval. Furthermore, bonded indebtedness secured by real property taxes must be imposed with a 2/3rds vote; however, under specified conditions, it may only require a 55% threshold for local school construction.

**Issue**
With the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978 and Proposition 218 in 1996, raising revenue at both the state and local level has become much more difficult. Proposition 13 capped the ad valorum property tax rate at 1% of a property's value at the time of sale (allowing for a modest annual increase) and imposed a 2/3rds vote in the Legislature for the enactment or increasing of taxes. Proposition 218 imposed a variety of restrictions on levying taxes and fees by municipalities, including the requirement of a local majority vote for generally-dedicated taxes and a local 2/3rds vote for specifically-dedicated taxes. Furthermore, Proposition 218 requires a notice process and a protest procedure when either raising or imposing fees. In many instances, this triggers a vote before imposition.

Despite the difficulties of increasing taxes and many fees, the business community in California believes that 'fees' have been imposed or raised that merely serve to raise general revenue. As such, the California Chamber of Commerce has sponsored Proposition 26 which restricts the imposition of fees by subjecting them to a 2/3rds vote. Specifically, revenue raisers would be classified as a 'tax' (and subject to a 2/3rds vote) unless the revenue does one or more of the following:

1. Confers a benefit or privilege directly to the payor.

2. Provides a direct service or product to the payor.

3. Covers the "reasonable" regulatory costs for licensing, permitting, investigating, inspecting, auditing, enforcing and/or adjudicating.

4. Constitutes a charge for accessing, buying or using state or local government property.

5. Levies a fine or penalty resulting from a violation of law.

In essence, Proposition 26 specifies that it is the burden of the state or local government to prove "by a preponderance of the evidence" that fees are not taxes. Furthermore, Proposition 26 applies to revenue raisers enacted between January 1, 2010 and the date the voters enact the measure, presumably November 2nd. As such, revenue raisers enacted between January 1st – November 2nd must have been enacted in accordance to Proposition 26 or those items will be invalidated.

**Staff Recommendation**

RCRC staff recommends an "**Oppose"** position. Simply put, this measure is one in a long line of ballot-box budgeting items, usually conducted through the statewide initiative process, which will only hamstring local government.

**Attachment**

- List of Support and Opposition

# Regional Council of Rural Counties
# Board of Directors Meeting
# <u>Excerpt of Approved Meeting Minutes – Proposition 26</u>
## Wednesday, August 18, 2010 – 9:00 a.m.
***1215 K Street, Suite 1650 – Conference Room***
***Sacramento, CA 95814***

**Proposition 26 – Action Item**

Paul Smith summarized Proposition 26 which would institute a 2/3rds vote on revenue raisers by both state and local governments unless the revenue raiser meets a certain 'test'. It was noted that it would be the burden of the state or local government to prove that the revenue raiser was not a tax, and thus not subject to a 2/3rds vote. Noting the potential for costly litigation to local governments, staff recommended the Board adopt an "Oppose" position.

> **Supervisor John Viegas, Glenn County, motioned to adopt an "Oppose" position on Proposition 26. Supervisor Richard Pland, Tuolumne County, seconded the motion**.

**A roll call vote was taken.**

**AYES:** Adams, Arcularius, Baugh, Finigan, Meacher, Munger, Otto, Pland, Spencer, Vann, Viegas, Willard
**NOES:** Abe, Cann, Kobseff, Nutting, Tryon, Yamaguchi
**ABSTAINING:** Bradshaw, Dahle, Dillon, Finigan, Forster
**Motion passes: AYES: 12 NOES: 6 ABSTENTIONS: 5**

# Rural County Representatives of California
# Board of Directors Meeting
# Excerpt of Approved Meeting Minutes – Tax Tax Fairness, Transparency and Accountability Act of 2018
## Wednesday, June 20, 2018 – 9:00 a.m.
## 1215 K Street, Suite 1650 – Board Room
## Sacramento, CA 95814

**Tax Fairness, Transparency and Accountability Act of 2018**
Paul A. Smith provided an analysis of the "Tax Fairness, Transparency and Accountability Act of 2018," which would restrict the ability of state and local governments to generate new revenues through taxes and fees. This proposal will appear on the November 2018 General Election ballot for voter consideration.

Mr. Smith expressed that this proposal would make it more difficult for Boards of Supervisors to exercise their revenue-raising authority. RCRC staff is also troubled by the proposal's retroactivity to January 1, 2018, which could impact a number of local measures that received voter approval in the June Primary Election and/or will receive voter approval in the November General Election.

**Staff Recommendation**
RCRC staff recommended the RCRC Board of Directors adopt an "Oppose" position on the Tax Fairness, Transparency and Accountability Act of 2018.

**Supervisor Bob Williams, Tehama County, motioned to adopt an "Oppose" position on Tax Fairness, Transparency and Accountability Act of 2018. Supervisor Michael Ranalli, El Dorado County, seconded the motion. Motion passes with Supervisor Kuyler Crocker, Tulare County voting "No."**

**To:** RCRC Board of Directors

**From:** Paul A. Smith, Vice President Governmental Affairs

**Date:** June 12, 2018

**Re:** Tax Fairness, Transparency and Accountability Act of 2018 – **ACTION**

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## Summary

This memo provides an analysis of the "Tax Fairness, Transparency and Accountability Act of 2018," which is slated for the November 2018 General Election ballot. RCRC staff is recommending the RCRC Board of Directors adopt an "Oppose" position on this measure.


## Background

Proposition 218, which was enacted in 1996, requires local governments to submit to the voters any ordinance to impose taxes for their approval and established the vote thresholds for general taxes (majority vote) and for special taxes (two-thirds), and requires general tax measures to be placed on regularly-scheduled election ballots.

Proposition 26, which was enacted in 2010 over the objections of RCRC, amended the California Constitution to define what constitutes a local tax. It provided that "tax" means "any levy, charge, or exaction of any kind imposed by a local government …" This broad definition was accompanied by several exceptions, that covered many fees or charges that a local agency may want to impose and allows that imposition via unilateral action of the governing without requiring voter approval.

## Issue

The California Business Roundtable is the lead proponent of the "Tax Fairness, Transparency and Accountability Act of 2018" initiative that seeks to restrict the ability of state and local governments to generate new revenues through taxes and fees. At the local level, the proposal amends Proposition 26 and Proposition 218 to require supermajority voter approval on any new tax (as defined), or the extension of an existing tax. Specifically, the measure would:

- Require two-thirds voter approval for <u>any</u> local tax increase <u>as well as</u> two-thirds approval by the local legislative body to place a tax measure on the ballot.
- Require two-thirds voter approval to extend an existing tax to a new territory, new class of payer or expanded base.
- Broadens the definition of "tax" by deleting or narrowing for certain fees that do not presently require voter approval.

- Specify that payments made voluntarily, or in exchange for benefits or privileges, may be considered taxes subject to voter approval.
- Require those fees that remain exempt from voter approval to be approved by two-thirds of the local legislative body.
- Require any tax placed on the ballot to detail how the revenues will be spent.
- Require all tax measures to be placed on general election ballots.
- Require any initiative-based tax or fee proposal to be approved with two-thirds vote.
- Specify that a levy or charge payable to a non-governmental entity is a tax of the local government under certain circumstances.
- Require any fee to reflect "actual" instead of "reasonable" costs.
- Increase the legal burden of proof that a fee is not a tax.
- Apply the two-thirds voter approval requirement for all taxes and the ballot detail requirements retroactively to any tax measures approved after January 1, 2018.

**Staff Recommendation**

RCRC staff recommends the Board of Directors adopt an "Oppose" position on the Tax Fairness, Transparency and Accountability Act of 2018. This proposal makes it more difficult to exercise a Board of Supervisors revenue-raising authority. Furthermore, staff is troubled by the measure's retroactivity to January 1, 2018, which could impact a number of local measures that received voter approval in June and/or will receive voter approval in November.

**Attachment**

- Copy of Tax Fairness, Transparency and Accountability Act of 2018

**To:** Members of the RCRC Board of Directors

**From:** John Kennedy, Senior Policy Advocate

**Date:** August 13, 2026

**Re:** Proposition 45: Building an Affordable California Act - **ACTION**

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**Summary**

This memo provides an analysis of Proposition 45, which would make significant changes to local and state permitting processes, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and tribal consultation obligations for a wide variety of "essential projects."

This proposition will be before the voters for consideration on the November 2026 ballot. RCRC Staff is recommending that the RCRC Board of Directors adopt an "Oppose" position.

In brief, the ballot measure:

- Expedites local and state permitting processes for "essential projects" and limits the scope of information that may be required of a project applicant.
- Requires all other approvals from public agencies other than the lead agency to be decided either 90 days from when the application was deemed completed or one day after approval of the project by the lead agency, whichever occurs later.
- Modifies the California Environmental Quality Act for these projects to:
  - Expedite the timeframe for adoption of environmental documents and requires a public agency to base its approval or denial on any available environmental review documents if the those deadlines cannot be met.
  - Allow a project applicant to elect to vest into any threshold of significance adopted or routinely used by any public agency.
  - Limit the number of project alternatives that must be considered and prohibit public agencies from requiring consideration of other project alternatives.
  - Reduce the size and scope of the administrative record.
  - Replace the "fair argument" standard with the "substantial evidence" standard of judicial review.
  - Compress the judicial review process, narrows the universe of remedies available to the court, and precludes future litigation in certain circumstances.
- Requires "essential projects" projects utilizing these provisions, and any related and ancillary public, private, and utility infrastructure and public service facilities, to use a skilled and trained workforce, pay prevailing wages, and/or have a project labor agreement.

- Expands tribal consultation and mitigation requirements but limits the universe of consultation to only federally recognized tribes.

**<u>Background</u>**
Proposition 45 is a long and complex measure with three separate and distinct components, which will be described individually below. An applicant can choose to utilize none, some, or all the provisions included in Proposition 45; however, ALL essential projects utilizing Proposition 45 MUST comply with the tribal screening/consultation and labor requirements outlined below.

*<u>Scope of Essential Projects</u>*

- *<u>Housing</u>* – Residential units, mixed-use development, transitional housing, emergency shelters, or supportive housing, farmworker housing, group living accommodations, student housing senior housing, subdivision or common interest development, conversion of an existing commercial building to residential use.
- *<u>Water</u>* – Construction, expansion, repair, replacement, improvement, or augmentation of a public water system, a system that directly or indirectly provides water to a public water system, or a system described and within the scope of the state Water Resilience Portfolio (not including Delta conveyance facilities)
- *<u>Clean Energy</u>* – Projects that support climate, energy efficiency, reliability, electrification, sustainability, or clean energy objectives by:
    - Producing, generating, or storing electricity derived from renewable or sustainable resources (solar, wind, geothermal, fuel cells, small hydroelectric facilities (30MW or less), digester gas, MSW conversion, landfill gas, ocean wave/thermal/tidal, and associated transmission lines.
    - Producing generating, storing, transmitting, or distributing clean hydrogen.
    - Developing, constructing, or installing microgrids.
    - Capturing, transporting, and/or storing carbon dioxide.
    - Developing, constructing, upgrading, or expanding transmission or distribution systems.
- *<u>Public Health</u>* – A medical treatment facility, including a health facility, a clinic, or medical office building.
- *<u>Public Safety</u>* – Police, sheriff's, or fire station or wildfire risk reduction project, including related to electric utility lines, roads, infrastructure, vegetation management, fuel reduction, home hardening, fuel breaks, and reducing fuel loading.
- *<u>Broadband Internet Access</u>* – A project to provide mass-market retail serve by wire service, wireless service, or radio that provides capability to transmit and receive data from all internet endpoints, excluding dial-up service.
- *<u>Education Facility</u>* – Acquisition, construction, expansion, remodeling, renovation, improvement, furnishing, or equipping of an educational facility.
- *<u>Transportation</u>* – Street, highway, and mass transit projects, public facilities for nonmotorized traffic, EV charging and refueling projects.
- *<u>Excludes</u>* projects that involve a jail or detention facility or development of a new oil or natural gas production facility.

- <u>"Essential project" ALSO includes</u> all related and ancillary public, private, and utility infrastructure and public service facilities to serve an essential project, including electric, telecommunication, gas, wastewater, stormwater, transit, police, fire, and transportation improvements (not including High Speed Rail).

*Local and State Permitting*

- Modifies and expedites the process by which local and state agencies must review and act upon permit applications for essential projects.
- Prohibits a local government from requiring an applicant to submit information that was not included on a publicly available checklist that existed at the time the initial application was completed.
- Requires all other approvals from public agencies other than the lead agency to be decided either 90 days from when the application was deemed completed or one day after approval of the project by the lead agency, whichever occurs later.

*California Environmental Quality Act*

- Expedites the deadline for preparation and adoption of CEQA environmental documents to 365 days after submission of a complete application for an EIR, 180 days for a negative declaration or mitigated negative declaration, or 90 days for other determinations.
    - Allows the deadline to be extended only upon written request from the project applicant.
    - If a lead agency fails to meet those timeframes, it must, within 60 days, complete the environmental review or assemble available environmental review documentation and hold a public meeting, make a final determination on the available environmental review, and either approve or disapprove the project.
- Establishes a 20-day public comment period for a negative declaration or mitigated negative declaration and a 45-day public comment period for a draft EIR, supplemental EIR, or subsequent EIR. Prohibits extending the public comment period except by a court.
- Narrows the scope of the CEQA administrative record to include only:
    - Written comments received during the public comment period (or received at least 48 hours prior to a public hearing for a project with no established public comment period).
    - Written comments received at least 48 hours prior to a public hearing on issues that could not have been raised during the public comment period because of significant changes to the project that precluded the issue from being raise or where new information was not and could not have been known, with a narrowed scope of what constitute "significant changes to the essential project".
    - Oral testimony at a noticed and recorded public hearing.
    - Lead agency or applicant responses to comments or questions from a public agency.
    - Notices, studies, and other documents required to be sent or distributed to members of the public by a lead agency, made available to the public at a public repository, or included on the lead agency's website.
- Allows a project applicant to elect to vest into any thresholds of significance should apply to a project to the extent ***a*** public agency has published, adopted, or routinely used such thresholds.

- Requires public agency actions to be based on compliance with existing laws, which only includes formally adopted legal requirements that existed and were in effect on the date the application was submitted to a public agency, with an exception for later-adopted requirements that are necessary to mitigate or avoid a specific, adverse life-safety impact based on objective, identified and written public safety standards, policies, or conditions.
- Provides that an EIR need only discuss the proposed project, a single project alternative (which should be designed to be compatible with applicable local zoning and land use policies, to the extent practicable), and a no project alternative.
    - Prohibits public agencies from requiring analysis or any additional alternatives.
- Changes judicial review for CEQA claims for essential projects as follows:
    - Limits judicial review for purposes of CEQA to a public agency's non-compliance with objective existing law.
    - Seeks to replace the "fair argument" standard with a "substantial evidence" standard of judicial review.
    - For claims related to noncompliance with public participation procedures, limits the court to only determine whether the failure to comply with those procedures was arbitrary and capricious and resulted in prejudicial error.
    - Requires judicial review of essential projects to be completed within 270 days of the public agency filing the notice of determination or notice of exemption, which may be extended by the court for up to 90 days.
    - Limits the scope of remedies, including injunctive relief, that may be ordered by the court for noncompliance with CEQA.
- Prohibits any further action or proceeding challenging project implementation or approval if the public agency's approval or authorization was not subject to judicial challenge, the approval or authorization was challenged and upheld, or the project complied with any corrective actions previously ordered by the court.
- Prohibits legal challenges to minor modifications to an essential project that do not result in any new significant impacts, or which do not substantially worsen any previously identified significant impacts.

*Labor Requirements*

- All essential projects (other than housing projects) utilizing these provisions must pay prevailing wages and have a project labor agreement or use a skilled and trained workforce.
- Housing projects must generally pay prevailing wages.
- Wildfire risk reduction projects are exempt from these requirements if the project is undertaken directly by a public agency using its own employees and those employees are covered by a collective bargaining agreement or other laws that provide equivalent wage, training, and safety standards.

*Tribal Screening and Consultation Requirements*

- Limits consultation obligations for "essential projects" to *only* federally recognized tribes.
- Requires any technical studies to be provided to consulting tribes for review and input.

- Requires proffered tribal traditional knowledge to be incorporated in the identification, treatment, and protection measures concerning tribal cultural resources.
- Expands the scope of tribal cultural resources to include any site, feature, place, cultural landscape, or sacred place identified by the Native American Heritage Commission as a sacred place or included in a tribal government register maintained by a Tribal Historic Preservation Officer.
- Requires early screening to identify and evaluate tribal cultural resources upon the earlier of the submittal of a preliminary application, the applicant's written notice of election to participate in a preliminary scoping process with streamlined alternatives analyses, or filing of an application for an essential project. The initial screening process is intended to identify and evaluate tribal cultural resources _prior_ to an application being deemed complete.
- Requires projects to avoid impacts to and preserve in place tribal cultural resources (where feasible), consider and incorporate tribal mitigation and treatment measures, provide technical reports to consulting tribes, and include measures for inadvertent tribal cultural resource discovery during construction-related ground disturbance.
- Limits lead agency approval of essential projects to situations when tribal consultation has concluded in good faith, whether there is agreement among all parties and inclusion of any agreed-upon mitigation and avoidance measures, and other measures have been adopted to minimize impacts to resources that could not be avoided or preserved in place.
- Removes the ability for a lead agency to approve a project in situations where any party, acting in good faith and after reasonable efforts, determines that mutual agreement cannot be reached.

**Discussion**

*Permit process provides greater certainty for project applicants, but significantly increases preparatory work and administrative challenges for local agencies while constraining informed decision-making.*

- BACA provides applicants a much more expedited local permit review process with far greater certainty for when final decisions must be made, but does so in a way that may constrain informed local decision making and environmental permitting decisions.
- These timelines may be very difficult to meet in practice, especially for smaller agencies with limited staff, thus requiring increased staffing costs and heightening litigation risk.
- BACA effectively requires local agencies to develop comprehensive permitting checklists for each of the broad array of essential projects, as the measure precludes locals from requesting any information that was not included on the checklist of the project applicant. This puts local agencies in the awkward of position of having to expend significant time and resources developing permitting checklists for projects that may or may not ultimately come before them. The alternative is not having a checklist is being unable to require more specificity if an application is submitted.
- The ballot measure provides time certainty for project applicants by requiring CEQA documents to be prepared within specific timeframes. If the environmental

documents are not completed within those timeframes, the measure requires the local agency to approve or reject the project based on the environmental review documents available. This could preclude informed decision making and mitigation of the project's significant effects on the environment, and creates significant litigation risk.

- The ballot measure creates certainty for project applicants by defining the universe of "existing laws" with which the project must comply. That universe is limited to those objective existing laws that were in effect at the time the project application was submitted. The only post-application laws that will apply to a project are those which the lead agency determines are necessary to mitigate or avoid a specific, adverse life-safety impact.
- The ballot measure limits judicial remedies by limiting the circumstances in which a court can issue an injunction or stop work on a project. Under the measure, the court may only issue an injunction where it can show, by clear and convincing evidence, that the project would have a specific, adverse impact on public safety and there is no feasible method to mitigate that impact.
- The ballot measure precludes legal challenges to "minor modifications" to an essential project that do not result in any new significant impacts or substantially worsen previously identified significant impacts.
- The measure overlays an entirely new set of procedural rules on top of the complex existing CEQA and permitting processes, while nonetheless expressing the intention to "maintain[] California's strongest-in-the-world environmental protections." This creates significant legal uncertainties that are likely to embroil local governments in additional litigation for decades to come.

*<u>Ballot measure embodies many significant CEQA reform measures previously supported by RCRC, but conditions those CEQA reforms on the project applicant using a skilled and trained workforce or having a project labor agreement.</u>*

- BACA contains many of the CEQA reform concepts that RCRC has long advocated for, including attempting to shift away from the "fair argument" standard of judicial review, reducing unnecessary alternatives analyses, clarifying and narrowing the scope of the administrative record, clarifying the public comment process, avoiding late hits/document dumps, and expediting judicial review. On the other hand, these "reforms" are only available to projects that agree to use a skilled and trained workforce or use a project labor agreement (or pay prevailing wages for housing projects). On balance, BACA will provide more certainty and reduce the risk of CEQA litigation and delays, but only for projects that can bear significantly higher project labor costs and compliance obligations that may not be achievable in many rural areas.

*<u>Ballot measure allows project applicants to cherry pick thresholds of significance adopted by distant and unrelated jurisdictions.</u>*

- Proponents argue that the measure is deferential to local decision-making and standards. However, the measure is carefully crafted to enable the project applicant to elect to use any published, adopted, or routinely used threshold of significance adopted by "a" public agency. This could be interpreted to mean that if any public agency has adopted a more lenient threshold of significance, the applicant can override the locally adopted threshold and vest into that alternative threshold adopted by another public agency.

*Ballot measure limits the ability for local agencies to require consideration of project alternatives.*

- Under BACA, CEQA must evaluate the project, a single proposed alternative, and the no-project alternative. This helps the project proponent avoid the costs, complexities, and risk associated with evaluating other alternatives – and not without justification. However, the measure also precludes local agencies from requiring consideration of any other alternatives, thereby limiting local discretion and ability to consider a broader array of project alternatives or configurations as the need arises.

*Ballot measure limits tribal consultation obligations for "essential projects" to only federally recognized tribes, but expands tribal consultation and resource protection requirements.*

- The ballot measure's tribal consultation requirements are non-discretionary and replace many existing tribal consultation requirements.
- The ballot measure limits consultation requirements to federally recognized tribes, meaning that lead agencies will not have to consult with non-federally recognized tribes for essential projects using the BACA process.
- The measure affords greater deference to and incorporation of traditional tribal knowledge in the identification of tribal cultural resources and mitigation measures to avoid or minimize impacts to those resources.
- The measure requires tribal cultural resources to be avoided and preserved in place, where feasible.
- The measure significantly expands the universe of tribal cultural resources to include anything included on a federally recognized tribal government register.

*Ballot measure may limit the ability for any party, acting in good faith and after reasonable efforts, to determine that mutual agreement cannot be reached between the parties.*

- Under existing law, a project may be approved when tribal consultation ends. That process allows consultation to end when any party, acting in good faith and after reasonable efforts, determines that mutual agreement cannot be reached on the matter. The ballot measure does NOT include this offramp and instead only allows a lead agency to approve an essential project when the tribal consultation has concluded in good faith, where mutually agreed-upon mitigation and avoidance measures are included as enforceable project conditions, and where the lead agency has documented its basis for determining that avoidance and preservation in place are not feasible. It is not immediately clear how lead agencies or courts will interpret this change in law; however, it is likely to be construed as an attempt to bar the ability for any party to unilaterally determine that mutual agreement cannot be reached.

*Labor requirements impose additional costs and logistical challenges.*

- If a project applicant chooses to use the BACA process, the ballot measure will require local governments and special districts to use a skilled and trained workforce, adopt a project labor agreement, and/or pay prevailing wages for all related and ancillary public, private, and utility infrastructure and public service facilities to serve that essential project, including electric, telecommunication, gas, wastewater, stormwater, transit, police, fire, and transportation improvements.

- It can be difficult for project applicants or local governments in some rural areas to find a skilled and trained workforce or contractors who pay prevailing wage, thereby undermining the utility of the measure or complicating compliance when carrying out related and ancillary infrastructure and facility improvements to serve the essential project.

*Legislative changes to the ballot measure will be virtually impossible.*

- The ballot measure allows the Legislature to amend the statute, but only by a 2/3 vote of each house after those changes have been in print for at least 12 business days prior to passage. The measure also limits the Legislature's ability to change the law by only allowing changes that are "consistent with, and further the purposes of" the measure. This will make it very difficult to adopt changes that even seek to clarify ambiguous provisions that could be construed to not work in favor of an expedited processes that is highly deferential to the project applicant.

*Permit streamlining benefits for wildfire risk reduction projects are likely illusory.*

- The ballot measure purports to simplify CEQA compliance for a broad array of wildfire risk reduction projects; however, those benefits are generally illusory and unlikely to be realized by any local governments. Like any other "essential project", BACA requires wildfire fuel reduction projects to comply with the skilled and trained/project labor agreement requirements that are difficult to achieve in rural areas, especially for fuel reduction projects. As an alternative, BACA allows these projects to qualify for the CEQA and permitting benefits of the measure, but ONLY IF the entirety of the project is undertaken *directly* by a public agency using its own employees that are covered by equivalent wage, training, and safety standards under a collective bargaining agreement or other laws. Given the limited personnel local governments have to carry out fuel reduction projects, and the fact that many are performed by contractors, this alternative pathway is likely to have little, if any, benefit for rural jurisdictions.

**Staff Recommendation**

RCRC staff recommends an "Oppose" position for Proposition 45.

**Attachments**

- Copy of Proposition 45
- List of Groups in Support and Opposition

November 24, 2025

**<u>VIA PERSONAL DELIVERY</u>**

Hon. Rob Bonta
Attorney General of California
1300 I Street, 17th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Attention: Ms. Anabel Renteria, Initiative Coordinator

Re: Request for Title and Summary for Proposed Initiative Statute (A.G. No. 25-0023) – *<u>Amended Language</u>*

Dear Mr. Bonta:

Pursuant to Section 9002(b) of the California Elections Code, please find attached hereto amendments to the above-captioned initiative measure. I hereby request that a title and summary be prepared for the initiative measure using the attached amended language. The required proponent affidavit(s) pursuant to Sections 9001 and 9608 of the California Elections Code, and a check for $2,000.00, were included with the original submission.

All inquires or correspondence relative to this initiative should be directed to Kurt R. Oneto at koneto@nmgovlaw.com or 916-446-6752.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Kurt R. Oneto, Proponent

Enclosure: Proposed Initiative Statute – *Amended Language*

**SECTION 1. Chapter 1.5 (commencing with Section 21010) is added to Division 13 of the Public Resources Code, to read:**

## CHAPTER 1.5. BUILDING AN AFFORDABLE CALIFORNIA ACT

### ARTICLE 1. Title, Findings and Declarations, Purpose.

**21010. Title.**

This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the Building an Affordable California Act.

**21011. Findings and Declarations.**

The People of the State of California hereby find and declare the following:

(a) California's outdated system for approving essential projects is too slow, too bureaucratic, and too costly. Essential projects like clean water, clean energy, hospitals, affordable housing, roads, wildfire prevention, schools, public safety, and other infrastructure improvements are being delayed or blocked by unnecessary red tape, bureaucratic delays, and excessive lawsuits.

(b) These delays substantially increase the cost of living for all Californians. Research shows that permitting delays alone add tens of thousands of dollars to the price of a new home—driving up rents and mortgages for homeowners and renters. Similar red tape adds billions of dollars to the cost of building hospitals, water infrastructure, roads, bridges, clean energy, schools, broadband, and wildfire mitigation projects—costs ultimately passed on to consumers and taxpayers.

(c) California's permitting laws were written more than 50 years ago, before today's modern environmental laws were in place. That outdated system now works against the state's environmental and public health goals by slowing down or blocking essential projects that would reduce air pollution, lower greenhouse gas emissions, safeguard water supplies, protect communities from wildfire, and preserve wildlife and the environment.

(d) The Building an Affordable California Act will modernize and streamline state law to cut bureaucratic red tape and unnecessary delays; limit frivolous lawsuits that block essential projects while allowing public agencies and essential project applicants to continue sharing the burden of defending against such suits; and speed up delivery of projects Californians rely on every day.

(e) Every year of delay means Californians wait longer and pay more for the things they need most. The Building an Affordable California Act applies to the state's most essential projects, including:

(1) Clean drinking water and secure water supplies for communities across the state.

(2) Safe, modern hospitals and clinics to ensure access to affordable health care.

(3) Clean energy and reliable electricity to reduce energy bills and fight climate change.

(4) Housing of all types in order to make housing more affordable for families struggling with skyrocketing rents and mortgages as well as vulnerable senior populations.

(5) Roads, bridges, and transit to cut traffic congestion and improve public safety.

(6) Wildfire prevention and resilience projects to protect lives, homes, and natural resources.

(7) Safe, modernized public schools and educational facilities for students and educators.

(8) Broadband and telecommunications infrastructure to connect underserved communities and expand opportunity.

(f) By speeding up these essential projects, the Building an Affordable California Act will make California more affordable and lower the cost of housing, energy, electricity, health care, and other necessities, while also reducing taxpayer costs for public works projects.

(g) The Building an Affordable California Act will also jump-start projects that create well-paying jobs and put tens of thousands of Californians to work—especially in construction, clean energy, and infrastructure—helping grow California's economy when it is needed most.

(h) Importantly, the Building an Affordable California Act maintains state and federal clean air, clean water, and environmental protection laws such as the Endangered Species Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, the Toxic Substances Control Act, the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, the Environmental Quality Improvement Act, the Global Warming Solutions Act, the California Coastal Act, and the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. This chapter will help build the projects needed to make California more affordable—without repealing these laws that keep families and the environment safe.

(i) We can and must build an affordable California.

**21012. Statement of Purpose.**

The purpose of this chapter is to make California more affordable by streamlining and speeding approval of essential projects—reducing costs for families and taxpayers, improving quality of life, creating good jobs, and maintaining California's strongest-in-the-world environmental protections.

## ARTICLE 2. Application of Chapter and Interaction with Other Laws.

**21013. Projects Subject to this Chapter.**

This chapter applies only to essential housing projects, essential clean energy projects, essential water projects, essential public health projects, essential public safety projects, essential broadband Internet access projects, essential education facility projects, and essential transportation projects, which the People of California hereby declare to be critical to their quality of life and affordability in this state.

**21014. Application of Chapter.**

(a) This chapter does not diminish the authority of any public agency to approve or disapprove an essential project. No outcomes on any proposed essential project are preordained by this chapter.

(b) This chapter does not exempt any essential project from environmental review under this division or any other law. Instead, this chapter establishes clear timelines and other procedures for review under this division and administrative permit review for essential projects.

(c) Except as otherwise provided herein, this chapter shall apply to review and processing of any and every application or approval for an essential project and its accompanying land use entitlements, including without limitation, discretionary adjudicative and legislative land use entitlements triggering programmatic, plan-level, or project-level environmental review under this division.

(d) This chapter shall apply to all public agencies.

(e)(1) To the extent a conflict exists between this chapter and any other law, this chapter shall be controlling. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary, this chapter shall not abrogate or limit any otherwise applicable statutory or categorical exemption from this division.

(2) Notwithstanding Section 21100 or any other law, the provisions of this chapter shall control and supersede any conflicting requirement for environmental review of an essential project, and any accompanying permit review. No provision of Section 21100 or any other law shall invalidate or limit the application of this chapter to an essential project.

(f)(1) An application for an essential project that was submitted to a public agency prior to the effective date of this chapter, and that has not yet received final approval prior to that date, may be withdrawn and resubmitted after the effective date of this chapter.

(2) An application for an essential project that is withdrawn and resubmitted as provided in paragraph (1) can be reviewed and approved pursuant to the provisions of this chapter.

(3) Essential housing projects with applications withdrawn and resubmitted as provided in paragraph (1) shall not lose any vested rights or other benefits the applicant acquired through any provisions of law, including without limitation, the Subdivision Map Act, Housing Accountability Act (Section 65589.5 of the Government Code), the Builder's Remedy (Statutes of 2024, chapter 268), and the Housing Crisis Act of 2019 (Statutes of 2019, chapter 654). Vested rights shall relate back to the date any preliminary application under Section 65941.1 of the Government Code was submitted or the date vesting occurs under other applicable law.

(4)(A) If an application for an essential project was deemed or determined complete prior to the effective date of this chapter, the application shall be deemed complete for purposes of this chapter, and a public agency shall not require additional completeness review.

(B) In circumstances where an application has been withdrawn and resubmitted as provided in paragraph (1), any deadlines in this chapter that are triggered by the date an application is determined or deemed to be complete shall be calculated from the time the essential project application is resubmitted by the applicant.

(g) The timelines and deadlines set forth in this chapter shall apply to all essential project applications that are determined or deemed complete, pursuant to Section 21017 or any other law, after the effective date of this chapter irrespective of the date of the application's submission.

(h) Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary:

(1) If an essential project is a portion or component of a larger project, the portion or component that qualifies as an essential project may be processed, reviewed, and approved pursuant to this chapter.

(2) If the whole of a project is an essential project, the essential project may be implemented in multiple phases, and phased applications are not required to individually meet the criteria for an essential project to be processed, reviewed, and approved pursuant to this chapter.

(h) Unless otherwise stated herein, nothing in this chapter shall be construed to eliminate or restrict a lead agency's discretion to determine an appropriate threshold or significance or mitigation measure in preparing environmental review documents.

(i) Nothing in this chapter prohibits a public agency from imposing a fee upon an applicant, consistent with Article XIII A and Article XIII C of the California Constitution, for purposes of covering governmental costs associated with processing and reviewing essential project applications.

(j) An applicant may consent to providing a public agency with additional time to complete environmental review pursuant to Sections 21018 or 21019, or to make a decision on other public agency action sought by the applicant pursuant to Section 21023, by agreeing to withhold a written request that the applicant is otherwise entitled to submit pursuant to subdivision (a) of Section 21020 or subdivision (b) of Section 21023.

**21015. Interaction with Other Laws.**

(a) In order to maximize the ability to streamline and speed up approval of essential projects, an applicant may elect to utilize none, some, or all of the provisions of this chapter, and may do so in combination with, or as alternatives to, other land use and environmental review laws, mechanisms, or procedures. Nothing in this chapter either (A) prohibits an applicant from availing itself of other land use and environmental review laws that would provide for more expeditious or advantageous review and approval of essential projects compared to this chapter; or (B) requires an applicant seeking approval of a project that meets the definition of an essential project to utilize this chapter.

(b) To the extent that an ambiguity arises regarding how this chapter might operate in conjunction with other provisions of law, the policies and intent set forth in Section 21029 shall be controlling.

(c) The following provisions shall apply to an essential housing project:

(1) The prevailing wage provisions of paragraph (8) of subdivision (a) of Section 65913.4 of the Government Code shall apply solely to buildings over 85 feet in height above grade in any essential housing project.

(2) The provisions of paragraph (3) and paragraph (5) of subdivision (d) of Section 21080.66, as added by Section 59 of Chapter 22 of the Statutes of 2025 (Assembly Bill 130), shall apply to an essential housing project that utilizes this chapter.

(3)(A) In addition to a direct contractor or subcontractor, the provisions of Section 218.9 of the Labor Code shall extend to the owner of an essential housing project during construction of the essential housing project that utilizes this chapter.

(B) For purposes of this paragraph, "owner" means an owner as defined in subdivision (e) of Section 8182 of the Civil Code.

(d) Notwithstanding subdivision (a):

(1) All essential projects that utilize this chapter shall comply with the requirements set forth in Section 21016 pertaining to initial screening and tribal consultation.

(2) With the exception of essential housing projects, all essential projects that utilize this chapter shall comply with the requirements set forth in Section 21028 pertaining to applying the labor requirements described in Section 21183.5 to essential projects.

(3)(A) Except as provided in subparagraph (B), all essential housing projects that utilize this chapter shall comply with the requirements set forth in subdivision (c) pertaining to wages and labor standards on essential housing projects.

(B) If an essential housing project applicant chooses to proceed in part pursuant to this chapter, and in part pursuant to another voluntary streamlined environmental review processing law codified outside of this chapter that also requires the use of either prevailing wages or a project labor agreement, the applicant is required to comply with whatever prevailing wage or project labor agreement requirements are mandated by the other streamlining law for essential project components(s) that are processed and approved pursuant to such other streamlining law.

## ARTICLE 3. Initial Screening, Tribal Consultation, and Completeness of Essential Project Applications.

### 21016. Tribal Cultural Resources: Initial Screening and Tribal Consultation on Essential Projects.

(a) Purpose. The People of the State of California hereby declare that this section is necessary in order to provide for early and meaningful tribal consultation as a key element of essential project planning while maintaining protections for tribal cultural resources. Consulting Tribes have knowledge and expertise concerning tribal cultural resources located within essential project areas.

(b) Construction and Interpretation.

(1) Notwithstanding Section 21015 or any other provision of law, the tribal consultation process for essential projects shall follow the provisions set forth in this section.

(2) Nothing in this chapter is intended to alter or conflict with federal government-to-government consultation obligations involving Consulting Tribes.

(3) The timelines established in Article 4 shall not alter the duration of consultation with a Consulting Tribe on an essential project pursuant to Sections 21080.3.1 and 21080.3.2.

(4) If any technical studies are conducted for the essential project that inform analysis, measures and/or treatment of tribal cultural resources, Consulting Tribes shall be afforded the opportunity to review and provide input on those studies.

(5) When provided by a Consulting Tribe, tribal traditional knowledge shall be incorporated in the identification, treatment, and protection measures concerning tribal cultural resources. As tribal cultural resources is a separate category from cultural resources and archaeological resources, some archaeological methods and standards may not be appropriate for tribal cultural resources. If the lead agency elects not to utilize tribal methods and standards or tribal traditional knowledge, it shall explain its decision in the environmental documents for the essential project, supported by substantial evidence.

(6) All information regarding tribal cultural resources and tribal traditional knowledge disclosed by a Consulting Tribe shall remain confidential consistent with subdivision (c) of

Section 21082.3, and such information shall not be disclosed in the administrative record of proceedings without the permission of the Consulting Tribe. Lead agencies shall, in consultation with affected Consulting Tribes, determine appropriate measures to maintain confidentiality of information regarding tribal cultural resources and tribal traditional knowledge, including, but not limited to, redaction of precise locations, restricted mapping, secure data storage, or other protective handling of tribal cultural resources information. Any written explanation under paragraph (5) of subdivision (c) shall not be subject to challenge to the extent the lead agency does not have permission from the Consulting Tribe to disclose supporting information due to the confidentiality requirements of this paragraph.

(7) Completion of the initial screening process pursuant to subdivision (c) operates separately from, and does not modify, pause, or affect, any requirements or timelines set forth in Section 21017 or any other provisions of this division.

(c) <u>Initial screening</u>. Upon the earlier of the applicant's submittal of a preliminary application under any other law, the applicant's written notice under subdivision (b) of Section 21024, or an application for an essential project, an early screening to identify and evaluate tribal cultural resources shall take place. An initial screening means the act of participating in early discussions, prior to an application being determined complete by the lead agency, through a meet and confer process between the Consulting Tribe, lead agency, and applicant regarding the potential effects a proposed essential project could have on tribal cultural resources. As part of the initial screening process, all of the following shall occur:

(1)(A) An applicant shall provide the lead agency with the following existing information:

(i) A description of the proposed essential project.

(ii) A conceptual site map showing the proposed footprint, alignment, or general boundaries of the project area.

(iii) A vicinity map identifying major landmarks, roadways, and natural features.

(iv) Any geotechnical, environmental, and site-specific technical studies previously developed to support meet and confer under paragraph (4) on early design, routing, or feasibility analysis relating to and/or affecting tribal cultural resources.

(v) For linear projects such as electric transmission lines, pipelines, rail lines, aqueducts, communications lines, and roads, applicants must include the general corridor and the location of any starting and ending facilities or substations.

(B) Applicants shall not be required to produce new studies or analyses for the purposes of this subdivision. Any input under this section other than regarding the identification of tribal cultural resources shall be provided during the tribal consultation process under subdivision (d).

(2) Within 20 days of receiving the information described in paragraph (1), the lead agency shall complete a records search for recorded and documented archaeological resources, cultural resources, and tribal cultural resources within the proposed project area and the area of potential effects (APE) (as that term is defined under 36 CFR § 800.16), as determined by the lead agency, through the following:

(A) The Sacred Lands File maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission;

(B) The California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) maintained by the Office of Historic Preservation; and

(C) The lead agency's records.

(3) Upon completing the search required by paragraph (2), the lead agency shall provide Consulting Tribes all information obtained pursuant to paragraphs (1) and paragraph (2), as well as an invitation to meet and confer pursuant to paragraph (4).

(4) After receiving the information provided by the lead agency pursuant to paragraph (3) and upon the request of a Consulting Tribe, the Consulting Tribe, lead agency, and applicant shall meet and confer regarding the proposed essential project and any known or recorded tribal cultural resources, and a Consulting Tribe may share any information, including information in tribal government registers. During the meet and confer, the three parties shall identify and evaluate treatment and protection methods, measures, and conditions to address impacts on tribal cultural resources, including avoidance and preservation in place. Unless otherwise agreed upon by all parties, any agreements among all the parties from the meet and confer shall be finalized during the tribal consultation process set forth in subdivision (d). The results of the meet and confer shall be documented and maintained by the lead agency in agreement with the Consulting Tribe.

(5)(A) If a Consulting Tribe does not respond to the initial screening invitation provided by the lead agency pursuant to paragraph (3) within 30 days, then the initial screening process under this subdivision shall be deemed to have concluded and the parties shall move into the tribal consultation process set forth in subdivision (d). A Consulting Tribe's decision not to meet and confer under the initial screening process in this subdivision shall in no way affect the Consulting Tribe's ability or right to participate in the tribal consultation process set forth in subdivision (d).

(B) The initial screening process provided in this subdivision shall end when the tribal consultation process set forth in subdivision (d) begins.

(C) Where the tribal consultation process set forth in subdivision (d) does not apply, the initial screening process under this subdivision shall terminate upon the earlier date of the parties' agreement from the meet and confer pursuant to paragraph (4) or 30 days from the date an application for an essential project is determined complete by the lead agency or deemed complete by operation of law.

(d) Tribal consultation. Tribal consultation for an essential project shall be conducted pursuant to Sections 21074, 21080.3.1, 21080.3.2, 21082.3, 21084.2, and 21084.3, except as modified as follows:

(1) The purpose of tribal consultation is to identify tribal cultural resources and evaluate treatment and protection measures for those tribal cultural resources, including the implementation of treatment and protection measures.

(2) Tribal consultation is not meaningful if the Consulting Tribe is not provided with reasonably requested technical information, including, but not limited to, project information and constraints, data, maps, and information concerning project activities as they relate to treatment and protection of tribal cultural resources. During tribal consultation pursuant to this subdivision, the lead agency shall engage in iterative discussions with the Consulting Tribe regarding the development of mitigation measures related to tribal cultural resources, including preliminary concepts or approaches prior to publication of any draft environmental document. This includes notifying the Consulting Tribe of any existing technical studies or reports in the lead agency's possession that relate to tribal cultural resources on or in the vicinity of the essential project site, to the extent permitted by applicable confidentiality laws, and providing the Consulting Tribe

with access to such studies or reports. To the extent any draft environmental review document is provided to the applicant for review in advance of the public comment period for that environmental review document, such draft shall also be made available to the Consulting Tribe at the time it is provided to the applicant. Nothing in this section shall be construed to require the lead agency to prepare or circulate draft environmental review documents for purposes of tribal consultation.

(3) Where the lead agency, a Consulting Tribe, and the applicant agree in writing to measures to avoid or mitigate a significant effect on a tribal cultural resource, those measures and any written agreement shall become enforceable conditions of project approval, subject to the confidentiality requirements under paragraph (6) of subdivision (b).

(e) Treatment and protection of tribal cultural resources. When feasible, damaging effects to any tribal cultural resources shall be avoided.

(1) Consistent with subdivision (b) of Section 21014, nothing in this subdivision alters the lead agency's obligation under CEQA to avoid or mitigate significant impacts to tribal cultural resources when feasible. Mitigation and treatment measures adopted in consultation with the Consulting Tribe pursuant to this subdivision to avoid or minimize significant impacts to tribal cultural resources shall be consistent with the following:

(A) Avoidance and preservation in place shall be considered when requested by the Consulting Tribe. A tribal cultural resource may be avoided or preserved in place through project design, buffering, or other protective measures to avoid the tribal cultural resources and protect the cultural and natural context, or planning greenspace, parks, or other open space to incorporate the tribal cultural resources with culturally appropriate protection and management criteria, which are referenced in the project's environmental documents.

(B) If an essential project has the potential to cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, and avoidance and preservation in place are not feasible, the lead agency shall demonstrate and document the basis for that determination with substantial evidence, and the Consulting Tribe may identify culturally appropriate mitigation measures, which the lead agency shall consider and incorporate, to the extent feasible, in developing mitigation and treatment measures in a manner consistent with paragraph (2) of subdivision (b) of Section 21084.3.

(C) When an essential project proposes construction-related ground disturbance activities and when requested by the Consulting Tribe, the lead agency shall include inadvertent discovery measures to reduce significant impacts to tribal cultural resources. Such measures may include procedures for temporary halts of grading, identification and assessment protocols, timing provisions, and additional treatment methods or protective measures.

(f) Essential project approval. A lead agency may only approve an essential project pursuant to this section when all of the following apply:

(1) Tribal consultation has concluded in good faith;

(2) Where there is agreement among all parties under either paragraph (4) of subdivision (c) or subdivision (d), any agreed-upon mitigation and avoidance measures are included as enforceable project conditions; and

(3) If avoidance and preservation in place is not feasible, the lead agency has demonstrated and documented the basis for that determination with substantial evidence and incorporated other measures to minimize impacts consistent with CEQA.

**21017. Determining Completeness of Essential Project Applications.**

(a)(1) When a public agency receives an initial application for an essential project, the public agency shall review the application, make a written finding whether the application is complete, and notify the applicant in writing of the determination.

(2) The written determination of completeness for an initial application shall be made within 30 days of the public agency's receipt of the initial application. If the public agency fails to provide a determination of completeness within 30 days, then the initial application shall be deemed complete for the purposes of this chapter and this division.

(3) An application shall not be determined to be incomplete on the basis of (A) informational or analytical studies or documents that were not required by the public agency in a written, publicly available submittal requirement checklist or similar document in existence at the time the initial application was submitted; or (B) statutes, regulations, rules, standards, or ordinances that are not existing laws.

(b) If the public agency's determination of completeness finds that the initial application for an essential project is incomplete, at the time that finding is made the public agency shall also provide the applicant with an exhaustive written corrections list containing thorough descriptions of the items and specific information, or lack thereof, that led to the finding of incompleteness.

(c)(1)(A) The applicant shall, within 90 days of a notification that its initial application is incomplete, submit additional information and/or a revised application that addresses the matters identified on the written corrections list.

(B) If the applicant cannot comply with the 90-day deadline in subparagraph (A) to submit either additional information or a revised application, the applicant shall notify the public agency in writing why it is unable to do so and include an estimate of when it will be able to do so.

(2) Upon any submission of supplemental information and/or a revised application, the public agency shall determine if the supplemented submittal is complete based only on the written corrections list provided by the agency pursuant to subdivision (b). The public agency shall provide a determination of completeness based upon the supplemented submittal within 30 days of receipt thereof. If the public agency finds that the supplemented submittal is still incomplete, at the time that finding is made the public agency shall provide the applicant with an updated exhaustive written corrections list therefor. The updated written corrections list may only contain items included on the written corrections list provided in response to the applicant's initial application.

(3) If a supplemented submittal is again deemed incomplete, the applicant may submit additional rounds of supplemental information and/or revised applications pursuant to the procedures and timelines set forth in this subdivision.

(4) If the public agency fails to provide a determination of completeness within 30 days of receiving either supplemental information and/or a revised application pursuant to paragraph (2) or paragraph (3), the application shall be deemed complete for purposes of this chapter and this division.

(5) A public agency shall not request or require an applicant to provide any new information unless that information was included on the exhaustive written corrections list for the immediately prior version of the application.

(d)(1) A determination of completeness finding that an initial application, supplemented application, or revised application is incomplete shall be appealable by the applicant to the public agency's planning commission, planning director, or other official with final authority over application completeness. If the public agency does not have a planning commission, planning director, or other official with final authority over application completeness, then the appeal shall be heard by the highest-ranking elected or appointed decision-making body or official of the agency. There shall be a final written determination on the appeal not later than 60 days after receipt of the applicant's written appeal.

(2) If the final written determination on the appeal is not made within the 60-day period described in paragraph (1), the application shall be deemed complete for the purposes of this chapter and this division.

(e) The applicant may bring a civil action challenging an adverse determination under subdivision (d). Any such action shall be commenced within 90 days of an adverse final written determination issued pursuant to subdivision (d).

## ARTICLE 4. Review of Completed Applications for Essential Projects.

### 21018. Local Agency Timeline for Completing Environmental Review of Essential Projects.

(a) A local agency that is acting as a lead agency ("local lead agency") for an application or approval of an essential project shall decide whether the project is subject to subdivision (b), subdivision (c), or subdivision (d) within 30 days of the earlier of the essential project application being determined or deemed to be complete pursuant to Section 21017, or deemed complete pursuant to any other law.

(b) Essential projects that require an environmental impact report. For essential projects that require an environmental impact report, the local lead agency shall make a final determination whether to certify an environmental impact report no later than 365 days after the earlier of the essential project application being determined or deemed to be complete pursuant to Section 21017, or deemed complete pursuant to any other law.

(c) Essential projects that require a negative declaration or mitigated negative declaration. For essential projects that require a negative declaration or mitigated negative declaration, the local lead agency shall make a final determination whether to adopt a negative declaration or mitigated negative declaration no later than 180 days after the earlier of the essential project application being determined or deemed to be complete pursuant to Section 21017, or deemed complete pursuant to any other law.

(d) For all other environmental review documentation prepared under this division or this chapter for an application or approval of an essential project, the local lead agency shall, within 90 days after the earlier of the essential project application being determined or deemed to be complete pursuant to Section 21017 or deemed complete pursuant to any other law, make a final determination that the essential project is exempt from this division or that the essential project's impacts were previously evaluated under a prior environmental review document pursuant to, without limitation, Section 21083.3 or Section 21094.5, or an addendum pursuant to Section 15162 or Section 15164 of the State CEQA Guidelines.

(e) The deadlines set forth in subdivision (b), subdivision (c), and subdivision (d) shall be extended upon written request from the applicant.

**21019. Timeline for Completing Environmental Review of Essential Projects by Public Agencies that are Not Local Agencies.**

(a) A public agency other than a local agency that is acting as a lead agency ("non-local lead agency") for an essential project shall decide whether the project is subject to subdivision (b), subdivision (c), or subdivision (d) within 30 days of the earlier of the essential project application being determined or deemed to be complete pursuant to Section 21017, or deemed complete pursuant to any other law.

(b) Essential projects that require an environmental impact report. For essential projects that require an environmental impact report, the non-local lead agency shall make a final determination whether to certify an environmental impact report no later than 365 days after the earlier of the essential project application being determined or deemed to be complete pursuant to Section 21017, or deemed complete pursuant to any other law.

(c) Essential projects that require a negative declaration or mitigated negative declaration. For essential projects that require a negative declaration or mitigated negative declaration, the non-local lead agency shall make a final determination whether to adopt a negative declaration or mitigated negative declaration no later than 180 days after the earlier of the essential project application being determined or deemed to be complete pursuant to Section 21017, or deemed complete pursuant to any other law.

(d) For all other environmental review documentation prepared under this division or this chapter for an application or approval of an essential project, the non-local lead agency shall, within 90 days after the earlier of the essential project application being determined or deemed to be complete pursuant to Section 21017 or deemed complete pursuant to any other law, make a final determination that the essential project is exempt from this division or that the essential project's impacts were previously evaluated under a prior environmental review document pursuant to, without limitation, Section 21083.3 or Section 21094.5, or an addendum pursuant to Section 15162 or Section 15164 of the State CEQA Guidelines.

(e) The deadlines set forth in subdivision (b), subdivision (c), and subdivision (d) shall be extended upon written request from the applicant.

**21020. Noncompliance with Timelines for Completing Environmental Review of Essential Projects.**

(a) When a local lead agency or a non-local lead agency fails to comply with a deadline set forth in subdivision (b) through subdivision (d) of Section 21018, or subdivision (b) through subdivision (d) of Section 21019, the applicant may make a written request for the agency to hold a meeting or hearing on the essential project as provided in this section.

(b) Within 60 days of receipt of a written request pursuant to subdivision (a), the local lead agency or non-local lead agency shall do all of the following:

(1) Complete all environmental review documentation for the essential project; or assemble available environmental review documentation including any applicant-prepared environmental review document as is allowed under subdivision (b) of Section 21082.1 or any other law.

(2) Hold a meeting or hearing on the essential project application as follows:

(A) If the agency has a multi-member decision-making body subject to the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act (Article 9 (commencing with Section 11120) of Chapter 1 of Part 1 of Division 3 of Title 2 of the Government Code), the Ralph M. Brown Act (Chapter 9 (commencing with Section 54950) of Part 1 of Division 2 of Title 5 of the Government Code), or similar open meeting law, the agency shall place the essential project on its agenda for a regular or special meeting of the agency's highest-ranking decision-making body.

(B) If the agency does not have a multi-member decision-making body subject to the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act, the Ralph M. Brown Act, or a similar open meeting law, then the highest-ranking official of the agency, or their designee, shall hold a hearing with the applicant on the essential project.

(3) Notwithstanding any other provision of this division or any other law or legal requirement to the contrary, at the meeting or hearing described in paragraph (2), the agency shall do both of the following:

(A) Make a final written determination on the available environmental review documentation that has been completed as of the date of the meeting or hearing.

(B) Make a final written determination to approve or disapprove the essential project.

(c)(1) If the local lead agency or non-local lead agency has a planning commission or planning director, upon receipt of a written request pursuant to subdivision (a), the planning commission or planning director shall hold a regular or special meeting for the purpose of providing a recommendation on the essential project.

(2) The meeting of the planning commission or planning director described in this subdivision shall occur within 30 days of receipt of a written request pursuant to subdivision (a).

(3) Any environmental review documentation needed for the meeting described in this subdivision shall be completed in advance of the date of the meeting as required by law.

(d) The deadlines set forth in subdivision (b) and subdivision (c) shall only be extended upon a written request made by the applicant.

(e) Except as provided in subdivision (f), a local lead agency and a non-local lead agency have a nondiscretionary ministerial duty to comply with the deadlines set forth in this section or in any written request made pursuant to subdivision (d) and complete the actions described in paragraph (3) of subdivision (b).

(f) If, prior to the expiration of the 60-day period provided in subdivision (b), the agency completes all environmental documentation for the essential project and issues a final written determination to approve the essential project, the agency and the applicant may mutually agree in writing to cancel the meeting or hearing on the essential project required by paragraph (2) of subdivision (b).

(g)(1) An action under this division may be brought by the applicant challenging the following:

(A) The agency's failure to comply with its nondiscretionary ministerial duties described in subdivision (e).

(B) The agency's denial or imposition of unlawful conditions of approval on an essential project.

(2) The action shall be commenced within 90 days of the agency's failure, denial, or imposition described in paragraph (1).

(h) Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, Section 21018, or Section 21019, where the lead agency for an essential project is also the applicant for that essential project, the lead agency may extend any deadline contained in this section, Section 21018, or Section 21019 through a written notice that specifies the duration of the extension and the reason for it. The notice shall be posted on the lead agency's website and included in the administrative record.

**21021. Timeline for Public Comments on Essential Projects.**

(a) A public agency shall circulate an environmental review document for an essential project for public comment periods as follows:

(1) 20 days for a negative declaration or mitigated negative declaration or other document requiring public circulation under state law.

(2) 45 days for a draft environmental impact report or subsequent or supplemental environmental impact report.

(b) A public comment period described in subdivision (a) shall not be tolled or extended except by a court of competent jurisdiction.

(c) If a public agency continues any public hearing on an essential project, or the CEQA review of that essential project, the public agency shall continue the hearing to a date certain and, upon approval of the continuance, close the public comment period. The public agency shall not reopen the public comment period at any subsequent hearing on the essential project.

(d)(1) Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, only the following comments shall be included in the administrative record for an essential project:

(A) Electronic and written comments received during the public comment periods set forth in subdivision (a).

(B) For CEQA determinations with no comment period set forth in subdivision (a), electronic and written comments received at least 48 hours prior to a public hearing or noticed decision on the environmental review documentation for the essential project.

(C)(i) For hearings or appeals of a CEQA determination, electronic and written comments received at least 48 hours prior to a public hearing on issues that could not have been raised during the public comment period set forth in subdivision (a) because of significant changes to the essential project that precluded the issue from being raised during the public comment period, or new information that was not known and could not have been known during the public comment period.

(ii) "Significant changes to the essential project" shall not include any changes to an essential project made in response to public comment, through the CEQA alternatives review process, or through lead agency concerns identified during the CEQA process.

(D) Oral testimony at a noticed and recorded public hearing.

(2) All other public comments shall be disregarded and excluded from the administrative record.

(e) Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, a response by the lead agency or applicant to a comment described in paragraph (1) of subdivision (d), or comments from the applicant in response to a question from a public agency or to demonstrate the essential project's compliance with this division, shall, without qualification, be included in the administrative record for an essential project.

**21022. Determination of Impacts.**

Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary:

(a)(1) A public agency considering whether to approve an essential project shall identify, evaluate, determine significance, and mitigate the impacts of an essential project based on compliance with existing laws.

(2) To the extent a public agency has published, adopted, or routinely used thresholds of significance for environmental effects of essential projects on the earlier of the date a preapplication or an application for an essential project is filed, an applicant may elect to vest into any such thresholds of significance, in which case the public agency shall use them in determining the significance of the essential project's environmental effects.

(b) An essential project's compliance with this division and the State CEQA Guidelines shall be based solely upon the project's compliance with subdivision (b) of Section 21029.

(c) An applicant may waive the application of one or both of subdivision (a) or subdivision (b) to an essential project by submitting a written request for a waiver to the public agency.

**21023. Other Public Agency Actions for Essential Projects.**

(a) If an essential project requires any other public agency action that is not expressly addressed by other provisions of this chapter, the public agency shall make a final written decision thereon based on compliance with existing laws. The final written decision on the other public agency action shall be completed as follows:

(1) Where a public agency is a lead agency for an essential project, the public agency shall make the final decision concurrently with its certification of the environmental impact report, adoption of a negative declaration or mitigated negative declaration, or determination of previous evaluation or exemption from this division, as applicable.

(2) A state lead agency may delay the final decision required by paragraph (1) by up to 90 days if all of the following apply:

(A) Prior to December 31, 2025, the state agency had an established process set forth in state statute or regulation for conducting evidentiary hearings on the type of public agency action being sought for the essential project.

(B) Prior to the deadline set forth in paragraph (1), the state agency provides written notice to the applicant that it will go forward with an evidentiary hearing.

(3) Where an applicant seeks an approval for an essential project from a public agency that was not a lead agency for that essential project during the first instance when the essential project underwent environmental review pursuant to this division, such public agency shall make

a final written decision before the later of: (A) 90 days from the earlier of the date the application for the public agency action was determined or deemed to be complete pursuant to Section 21017, or deemed complete pursuant to any other law; or (B) 1 day has passed from the date the lead agency approved the project.

(b) When a public agency fails to comply with a deadline set forth in subdivision (a), the applicant may make a written request for the public agency to hold a meeting or hearing on the other public agency action sought from the public agency.

(c) Within 45 days of receipt of a written request pursuant to subdivision (b), the public agency shall do all of the following:

(1) Hold a meeting or hearing on the essential project application as follows:

(A) If the public agency has a multi-member decision-making body subject to the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act (Article 9 (commencing with Section 11120) of Chapter 1 of Part 1 of Division 3 of Title 2 of the Government Code), the Ralph M. Brown Act (Chapter 9 (commencing with Section 54950) of Part 1 of Division 2 of Title 5 of the Government Code), or similar open meeting law, the public agency shall place the other agency action sought from the public agency on its agenda for a regular or special meeting of the agency's highest-ranking decision-making body.

(B) If the public agency does not have a multi-member decision-making body subject to the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act, the Ralph M. Brown Act, or similar open meeting law, then the highest-ranking official of the public agency, or his or her designee, shall hold a hearing with the applicant on the other public agency action sought by the applicant.

(2) Notwithstanding any other provision of this division or any other law or legal requirement to the contrary, at the meeting or hearing described in paragraph (1), the public agency shall make a final written decision to whether grant or deny the other public agency action sought by the applicant.

(d) The deadlines set forth in subdivision (a) and subdivision (c) shall only be extended upon a written request made by the applicant.

(e) Except as provided in subdivision (f), a public agency has a nondiscretionary ministerial duty to comply with the deadlines set forth in this section or in any written request pursuant to subdivision (d) and make the decision described in paragraph (2) of subdivision (c).

(f) If, prior to the expiration of the 45-day period provided in subdivision (c), the public agency makes a final written determination to grant the other public agency action sought for the essential project, the public agency and the applicant may mutually agree in writing to cancel the meeting or hearing required by paragraph (1) of subdivision (c).

(g)(1) An applicant may bring an action under this division challenging the following:

(A) The agency's failure to comply with its nondiscretionary ministerial duties described in subdivision (e).

(B) The agency's denial or imposition of unlawful conditions of approval on the other public agency action sought from the public agency.

(2) The action shall be commenced within 90 days of the agency's failure, denial, or imposition described in paragraph (1).

## ARTICLE 5. Preliminary Scoping Process and Streamlined Alternatives Analysis for Essential Projects.

### 21024. Preliminary Scoping Process for Essential Projects.

(a) An applicant may, but is not required to, utilize the preliminary scoping process and streamlined alternatives analysis as provided in this article. However, where an applicant voluntarily chooses to utilize this preliminary scoping process and streamlined alternatives analysis, it shall comply with this article.

(b)(1) Prior to submitting an application for an essential project, an applicant that chooses to proceed in accordance with this article shall provide written notice to the lead agency of its intent to complete the scoping process and streamlined alternatives analysis set forth in this article.

(2) The written notice shall present a preliminary overview and description of the proposed essential project sufficient to inform the lead agency and the public of the anticipated features of the project. The written notice is not required to include detailed engineering plans, technical studies, or design-level drawings. The description shall include, to the extent known, the following:

(A) The project's location, size, and boundaries.

(B) The principal components and fundamental purpose of the project.

(C) The general type of land use, facility, or infrastructure proposed.

(D) Any known or reasonably foreseeable resource areas that may be impacted.

(E) Any anticipated permits or approvals required from public agencies.

(3) The written notice shall also prominently identify an email address for the applicant where the lead agency and the public may submit comments on the proposed essential project.

(c)(1) After receipt by the lead agency of the written notice described in subdivision (b), the applicant and the lead agency shall engage in at least two meetings for the purpose of discussing the proposed essential project, potential alternatives, and identifying potentially impacted resource areas.

(2) The lead agency shall maintain a record of all meeting summaries.

(d)(1) The lead agency shall post the written notice received pursuant to subdivision (b) on its website. The posting shall prominently identify the email address described in paragraph (3) of subdivision (b) in order to facilitate the public's ability to submit comments to the applicant via email.

(2) The applicant shall maintain a record summarizing public input received via email during the preliminary scoping phase.

(3) The applicant shall not be required to respond to any input obtained pursuant to this section.

(e) An applicant may, but shall not be required to, convene one or more public meetings or workshops, including via virtual or online formats, for the purpose of obtaining additional public input on the proposed essential project.

(f) The preliminary scoping process described in this section shall be completed within not more than 60 days from the date that the lead agency received written notice pursuant to subdivision (b).

(g) Where an applicant does not elect to utilize the scoping process provided in this section, other scoping requirements set forth in this division shall continue to apply.

(h) Notwithstanding any provision of this section, with respect to an essential housing project, the preliminary scoping process provided herein shall not be a prerequisite to filing a preliminary application under the Housing Crisis Act of 2019 as enacted by Chapter 654 of the Statutes of 2019 (Senate Bill 330).

**21025. Streamlined Alternatives Analysis for Essential Projects.**

(a) Upon completion of the preliminary scoping process set forth in Section 21024, the applicant shall develop one proposed alternative to the essential project. The proposed alternative shall take into consideration input obtained pursuant to Section 21024, and shall comply with all of the following:

(1) The proposed alternative shall be compatible with the proposed essential project's fundamental purpose as described pursuant to Section 21024.

(2) To the extent practicable, the proposed alternative should be designed to be compatible with applicable local zoning and land use policies.

(3) The proposed alternative does not need to be located at a different site from the proposed essential project.

(b) Notwithstanding Section 21100 or any other provision of this division, and except as provided in subdivision (f), an environmental impact report prepared for an essential project that complies with this article shall only analyze the following:

(1) The proposed essential project.

(2)(A) The applicant's proposed alternative developed pursuant to this article.

(B) For purposes of satisfying this article, the applicant's proposed alternative may include an alternative or additional component of the proposed essential project, where such additional or alternative component may include onsite or offsite physical improvements, or alternative or additional operational parameters or programs, designed to lessen impacts.

(C) A proposed alternative developed pursuant to this article shall be presumed to lessen impacts that the alternative is intended to address to a level of insignificance as long as the applicant demonstrates that substantial evidence exists to support the presumption. However, the presumption shall have no bearing or effect on whether the alternative is ultimately feasible or environmentally preferred.

(3) The "no project" alternative. The "no project" alternative shall consider the reasonably foreseeable environmental conditions that would result if the essential project is not

approved, including reasonably foreseeable future alternative uses of the site proposed for the essential project, any environmental impacts from such alternative uses, and benefits resulting from the essential project.

(c) The alternatives described in subdivision (b) for an essential project are sufficient for all purposes under this chapter, this division, and any other law. Except as provided in subdivision (f), all additional alternatives beyond those described in subdivision (b) are unnecessary, and no public agency or other body or entity shall require analysis of unnecessary alternatives.

(d) Within 15 days after the close of the preliminary scoping process in Section 21024, the applicant shall transmit to the lead agency a written submittal that includes:

(1) A description of the proposed essential project.

(2) A description of the single proposed alternative developed pursuant to this article.

(3) A description of the no project alternative described in paragraph (3) of subdivision (b).

(e) The lead agency shall, within 15 days after receiving the proposed alternative, issue a written certification stating whether the applicant has met the requirements of this article. Alternatively, the lead agency may certify that the applicant has met the requirements of this article by taking no affirmative action within 15 days after receiving the proposed alternative. The lead agency's certification shall be final unless an interested party files an administrative appeal within 5 days of the certification's issuance.

(f) Nothing in this article prohibits an applicant from proposing additional project alternatives, at the applicant's discretion.

(g) Subject to the requirements of this chapter and any limitations imposed by other provisions of law, the lead agency retains discretion to approve the proposed essential project, approve the proposed alternative developed pursuant to this article, or select the "no project" alternative.

(h) For purposes of this section, "proposed alternative" means a single potentially feasible alternative to the essential project that is developed by the applicant.

**ARTICLE 6. Judicial Review of Essential Project Approvals or Authorizations.**

**21026. Judicial Review of Essential Project Approvals or Authorizations.**

(a)(1) Any action or proceeding to attack, review, set aside, void, or annul any approval or authorization by a public agency with respect to an essential project, on the grounds of noncompliance with this chapter, this division, or the State CEQA Guidelines, shall be conducted and completed in accordance with the requirements of this article.

(2) This article shall apply to any and all actions or proceedings pending on, or commenced after, the effective date of this chapter.

(b)(1) In any action or proceeding brought to attack, review, set aside, void, or annul an approval or authorization of an essential project on the grounds of noncompliance with this chapter, this division, or the State CEQA Guidelines as provided in subdivision (b) of Section 21029, a petitioner's claims shall be limited to a public agency's non-compliance with objective existing laws, and the scope of the court's review shall be limited to whether the approval or authorization complies objective existing laws.

(2) For the purpose of this subdivision, "objective" means involving no personal or subjective judgment and being uniformly verifiable by reference to an external and uniform benchmark or criterion available and knowable by both the applicant and the public agency before the application was submitted.

(c)(1) In any action or proceeding to attack, review, set aside, void, or annul an approval or authorization of an essential project on the grounds of noncompliance with this chapter, this division, or the State CEQA Guidelines as provided in subdivision (b) of Section 21029, the court shall only determine whether the approval or authorization is supported by substantial evidence in light of the whole record.

(2) In any action or proceeding, to attack, review, set aside, void, or annul a public agency's approval or authorization of an essential project on the grounds that it has been made without completing the public participation procedures, the court shall only determine whether the failure to comply with the public participation procedures was arbitrary and capricious and resulted in prejudicial error.

(3) Nothing in this division or the State CEQA Guidelines shall be applied or construed as imposing procedural or substantive requirements beyond those explicitly set forth in this division or the State CEQA Guidelines as modified or limited by the provisions of this chapter.

(d) Nothing in this article shall be construed to supersede Section 1756 and Section 1759 of the Public Utilities Code, or any other provision of law governing judicial review of orders or decisions of the Public Utilities Commission.

**21027. Timelines and Processes Applicable to Judicial Review of Essential Project Approvals or Authorizations.**

(a) Timelines.

(1)(A) An action or proceeding, to attack, review, set aside, void, or annul a public agency's approval or authorization of an essential project shall be commenced within 30 days from the date the public agency files a notice of determination or notice of exemption pursuant to Section 21152 or Section 21108. The action or proceeding shall be completed within 270 days, inclusive of original and appellate court proceedings, pursuant to the judicial streamlining procedures applicable to environmental leadership development projects under Section 21185.

(B) The court may, in its own discretion, extend the 270-day deadline contained in subparagraph (A) by up to an additional 90 days

(2) Notwithstanding any contrary provision in Section 21185 or any rule adopted by the Judicial Council, and except as provided in subparagraph (B) of paragraph (1), the 270-day deadline in paragraph (1) shall only be extended upon mutual written consent of the plaintiff/petitioner, the public agency, and the applicant.

(b) Administrative Record.

The whole administrative record consists only of notices, studies, and other documents consistent with the following:

(1) Documents required under this division to be sent or distributed to members of the public by the lead agency, made available to the public at a public repository such as a library, or included on the website of the lead agency; and

(2) With respect to public comments, comments described in subdivision (d) of Section 21021, and responses and comments described in subdivision (e) of Section 21021.

(c) Remedies.

(1) If the court finds, as a result of a trial, hearing, or remand from an appellate court, that a public agency's approval or authorization of an essential project is not supported by substantial evidence in the record, the court shall issue an order and peremptory writ of mandate explaining the deficiency with specificity as to which requirement of this division or the State CEQA Guidelines with which the approval or authorization does not comply; and identify what part, phase, or activity of an essential project was affected by the noncompliance.

(2) The remedy shall be limited only to prohibiting commencement of the noncomplying part, phase, or activity until such time that the noncompliance is corrected.

(3) When such required corrective actions have been completed, the public agency shall file a return to the writ affirming compliance, and the court shall thereafter dismiss the action or proceeding. A court may not order or direct via writ or any other form of order, injunction, or decision that a public agency rescind its approval or authorization of the essential project.

(4) Any essential project part, phase, or activity not within the scope of the deficiency identified in the writ shall not be subject to the writ, and is not subject to further challenge in an action or proceeding under this division.

(d) Subsequent Approvals or Authorizations.

(1) No further action or proceeding to challenge the implementation through completion of construction or subsequent approval or authorization of an essential project, or portion of an essential project, may be filed if the public agency's approval or authorization was not subject to a judicial challenge, the public agency approval or authorization was challenged and upheld, or the public agency has filed a return to the writ which has been accepted as satisfactory by the court pursuant to subdivision (c).

(2) Minor modifications to an essential project which do not result in any new significant impacts, or which do not substantially worsen any previously identified significant impacts, of the initially approved essential project, may not be challenged in an action or proceeding under this division.

(e) Injunctive Relief.

(1) Upon a showing by clear and convincing evidence that an essential project would have a specific, adverse impact upon public safety, and there is no feasible method to

satisfactorily mitigate or avoid the specific, adverse impact upon public safety, a court may order that construction or completion of the particular essential project component that would result in the specific, adverse impact upon public safety be halted or prohibited solely by issuing a temporary injunction.

(2) For purposes of paragraph (1), satisfactory mitigation to avoid the specific, adverse impact upon public safety shall be deemed to exist upon either of the following:

(A) A public agency's subsequent decision to modify the essential project to avoid or mitigate to a less than significant that specific, adverse public safety impact (and which shall not require the agency to take any further action under this division).

(B) A public agency's determination that the specific, adverse impact upon public safety cannot be avoided or mitigated to a less than significant level following preparation of an environmental impact report or supplemental environmental impact report addressing only that specific, adverse public safety impact under the timelines and procedures set forth in this chapter.

## ARTICLE 7. Definitions.

### 21028. Definitions.

For purposes of this chapter, as used in both the singular and plural form, the following definitions shall apply:

(a) "Applicant" means any person, legal entity, public agency, or public utility that proposes an essential project.

(b) "Approval or authorization" means any approval, authorization, determination, finding, financing, real property transaction or contract, or other public agency actions that further the advancement, construction, completion, or realization of an essential project.

(c) "California educational institution" means all of the following: a school district; a county superintendent of schools; a county board of education; a community college district; a state special school; the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges or the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges; the California State University or the Board of Trustees of the California State University; the University of California or the Regents of the University of California; the University of California Law San Francisco (formerly Hastings College of the Law); a charter school established pursuant to Part 26.8 (commencing with

Section 47600) of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Education Code; and a nonprofit college or university with membership in the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities.

(d) "CEQA" means the California Environmental Quality Act (Division 13 (commencing with Section 21000) of the Public Resources Code).

(e)(1) "Consulting Tribe" means a tribe that appears on the most recent list published by the United States pursuant to the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994 (25 U.S.C § 5131), and is traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of the proposed essential project.

(2) Notwithstanding Section 21073 or any other provision of law, "California Native American tribe" as used in, or with respect to, Sections 21074, 21080.3.1, 21080.3.2, 21082.3, 21084.2, 21084.3, and this chapter, shall instead mean, and be read as, "Consulting Tribe" when the project is an essential project.

(f) "Day" means the following:

(1) As used in Section 21018 and Section 21019, "day" means any day other than a Saturday, Sunday, or any day designated as a state holiday.

(2) As used in any section of this chapter except for Section 21018 and Section 21019, "day" means a calendar day.

(g) "Educational facility" means any real property, facility, structure, building, or fixture that is owned or operated, or will be owned or operated upon completion, by one or more California educational institutions for educational purposes.

(h) "Environmental review document" or "environmental review documentation" means initial studies; negative declarations; mitigated negative declarations; draft and final environmental impact reports; documents prepared as substitutes for environmental impact reports; negative declaration and mitigated negative declarations under a program certified pursuant to Section 21080.5; documents or documentation used to substantiate the applicability of statutory or categorial exemptions from this division or streamlining provisions that include, without limitation, those under Sections 21083.3 and 21094.4; addenda and other supplemental or subsequent review documents; documents prepared under the National Environmental Policy Act and used by a public agency in the place of any of the foregoing documents or documentation; and environmental documents as defined in Section 15361 of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations.

(i)(1) "Essential broadband Internet access project" means a project to provide mass-market retail service by wire service, wireless service, or radio to customers in this state that provides the capability to transmit data to, and receive data from, all or substantially all Internet endpoints, including, but not limited to, any capabilities that are incidental to and enable the operation of the communications service, but excluding dial-up Internet access service.

(2) An "essential broadband Internet access project" shall comply with all labor requirements described in Section 21183.5.

(j)(1) "Essential clean energy project" means a project that supports California's climate, energy efficiency, reliability, electrification, sustainability, or clean energy objectives through one or more of the following:

(A)(i) Producing, generating, or storing electricity derived from renewable or sustainable resources, including, but not limited to, solar, wind, geothermal, fuel cells that comply with the emissions standards adopted by the State Air Resources Board pursuant to the distributed generation certification program requirements of Section 94203 of Title 17 of the California Code of Regulations, small hydroelectric generation of 30 megawatts or less, digester gas, municipal solid waste conversion, landfill gas, ocean wave, ocean thermal, or tidal current, and associated transmission lines.

(ii) "Associated transmission lines" means a transmission line that is required for the interconnection or delivery of electricity from a facility described in clause (i).

(iii) Notwithstanding clause (i), this subparagraph excludes producing or generating electricity from nuclear power.

(B) Producing, generating, storing, transmitting, or distributing clean hydrogen, which is not derived from a fossil fuel feedstock.

(C) Developing, constructing, or installing microgrids and associated infrastructure. For purposes of this subparagraph, "microgrid" means a microgrid as defined in subdivision (d) of Section 8370 of the Public Utilities Code.

(D) Capturing, transporting, and/or storing carbon dioxide emissions for permanent isolation from sources including, but not limited to, energy production, manufacturing, or refining facilities.

(E) Developing, constructing, upgrading, or expanding transmission or distribution system components identified in a transmission planning process approved by the Independent System Operator or in an Integrated Energy Policy Report adopted pursuant to Section 25302, including financing of such facilities, assets, or components through sale, lease, assignment, mortgage, or other disposition or encumbrance requiring state agency approval.

(2) An "essential clean energy project" shall comply with all labor requirements described in Section 21183.5.

(k)(1) "Essential education facility project" means the acquisition, construction, expansion, remodeling, renovation, improvement, furnishing, or equipping of an educational facility.

(2) An essential education facility project shall comply with all labor requirements described in Section 21183.5.

(l) "Essential housing project" means all of the following:

(1) Residential units only.

(2) A mixed-use development.

(3) Transitional housing, emergency shelters, or supportive housing, as defined in subdivisions (g), (n), and (q) of Section 65582 of the Government Code.

(4) Farmworker housing, as defined in subdivision (h) of Section 50199.7 of the Health and Safety Code.

(5) Group living accommodations, meaning building(s) or portion of any building(s) designed for or accommodating a residential use by persons not living together as a household, typically without separate kitchens or bathroom facilities for each room or unit. This use includes, without limitation, convents, monasteries, and other types of organizational housing.

(6) Student housing units, meaning any residential units or group living accommodation intended for use by students, including, without limitation, dormitory-style student housing and suite-style student housing.

(7)(A) Senior housing units, meaning any residential units or group living accommodation of any size intended for occupation by persons 55 years of age or over, including, without limitation, the following: (i) an intergenerational housing development; (ii) senior congregate housing; (iii) a senior citizen housing development as defined in paragraph (4) of subdivision (b) of Section 51.3 of the Civil Code; (iv) a residential care facility for the elderly as defined in paragraph (1) of subdivision (o) of Section 1569.2 of the Health and Safety Code; and (v) a continuing care retirement community as defined in paragraph (10) of subdivision (a) of Section 1771 of the Health and Safety Code.

(B) This paragraph shall not be construed to limit the authority of a public agency to categorize senior housing land uses as non-residential under its zoning ordinances or other laws, except that senior housing units shall qualify as a "housing development project" under paragraph (2) of subdivision (h) of Section 65589.5 of the Government Code.

(8) A subdivision or common interest development, as defined in Section 4100 of the Civil Code, consisting of residential units or unimproved residential lots.

(9) A conversion of an existing commercial building to residential use.

(m) "Essential project" means a project that meets all of the following requirements:

(1)(A) The project is an essential housing project, essential water project, essential clean energy project, essential public health project, essential public safety project, essential broadband Internet access project, essential education facility project, or essential transportation project.

(B) An essential project includes all related and ancillary public, private, and utility infrastructure and public service facilities required by a utility or public agency, or included in an essential project application as part of the "whole of the project," to serve a project identified in subparagraph (A), such as electric, telecommunication, gas, water, wastewater, stormwater, transit, police, fire, and transportation improvements that provide required public and utility services and infrastructure to the project. Where a particular labor standard is applied to an essential project by other provisions of this chapter, that labor standard shall apply to the components of the essential project described in this subparagraph.

(2) The project does not include a jail or other detention facility, or involve the development of a new oil or natural gas production facility.

(n)(1) "Essential public health project" means a medical treatment facility.

(2) An "essential public health project" shall comply with all labor requirements described in Section 21183.5.

(o)(1) "Essential public safety project" means a first responder facility or a wildfire risk reduction project.

(2)(A) An "essential public safety project" shall comply with all labor requirements described in Section 21183.5.

(B) A wildfire risk reduction project limited to vegetation management, fuel reduction, creating or maintaining fuel breaks, or reducing fuel loading that is undertaken directly by a public agency using its own employees shall be deemed to comply with this paragraph if the public agency's employees working on the project are covered by a collective bargaining agreement or other state civil service laws that provide equivalent wage, training, and safety standards.

(p)(1) "Essential transportation project" means the following:

(A) A project described in subdivision (a) or subdivision (b) of Section 2 of Article XIX of the California Constitution.

(B) Electric vehicle charging and refueling infrastructure.

(2) An "essential transportation project" shall comply with all labor requirements described in Section 21183.5.

(3) An "essential transportation project" does not include a high-speed train, a high-speed train system, a corridor, or a usable segment, as those terms are defined in Section 2704.01 of the Streets and Highways Code, or any other component of the Safe, Reliable High-Speed Passenger Train Bond Act for the 21st Century (Chapter 20 (commencing with Section 2704) of Division 3 of the Streets and Highways Code).

(q)(1) "Essential water project" means any project or action to construct, expand, repair, replace, improve, or augment any of the following: (A) a "public water system" as defined by subdivision (h) of Section 116275 of the Health and Safety Code; (B) a system that directly or indirectly provides water to a public water system; or (C) a system which is generally described and within the scope of the State's Water Resilience Portfolio.

(2) An "essential water project" shall comply with all labor requirements described in Section 21183.5.

(3) "An essential water project" does not include Delta conveyance facilities as defined in subdivision (f) of Section 79702 of the Water Code.

(r) "Existing laws" means the following:

(1) Formally adopted legal requirements contained in statutes, regulations, rules, standards, or ordinances that existed and were in effect on the date an application for an essential project was submitted to a public agency.

(2)(A) A formally adopted legal requirement contained in a statute, regulation, ordinance, standard, or rule that was not in effect on the date an application for an essential project was submitted to a public agency, but the lead agency makes a finding that that compliance with the particular statute, regulation, ordinance, standard, or rule is necessary to mitigate or avoid a specific, adverse life-safety impact, meaning a significant, quantifiable, direct, and unavoidable life-safety impact, including life-safety impacts associated with new or emerging technologies, materials, or grid-integration systems, and that is based on objective, identified and written public safety standards, policies, or conditions. The lead agency shall notify the applicant within 72 hours of making a finding described in this subparagraph

(B) The finding described in subparagraph (A) must be made before the earlier of either (i) environmental review of the essential project pursuant to this chapter has been completed; or (ii) the initial building permit application or plan-review package has been submitted to the authority having jurisdiction thereover.

(3) Any update to the California Building Standards Code, including, without limitation, the California Fire Code that takes effect before the earlier of either (A) environmental review of the essential project pursuant to this chapter has been completed; or (B) the initial building permit application or plan-review package has been submitted to the authority having jurisdiction thereover.

(s) "Feasible" means capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time, taking into account economic, environmental, legal, social, and technological factors.

(t)(1) "First responder facility" means all of the following:

(A) A fire station owned or operated by the State of California, a city, a county, a city and county, a joint powers authority, a Consulting Tribe, or a special district.

(B) A police station or sheriff's station owned or operated by a city, a county, a city and county, a joint powers authority, or a special district but excluding any portion thereof used as a jail or other detention facility.

(2) "First responder facility" does not include the following:

(A) Any facility owned, operated, or leased by the United States government.

(B) Any facility used as an immigration detention facility or a state prison.

(u) "Lead agency" means a lead agency as defined in Section 21067.

(v) "Local agency" means a public entity that is not a "state agency" as defined in this article.

(w) "Medical office building" means a building whose primary function is to provide office space for health care practitioners licensed, certified, registered, or otherwise authorized to practice pursuant to Division 2 of the Business and Professions Code.

(x) "Medical treatment facility" means all of the following: (1) a health facility as defined in Section 1250 of the Health and Safety Code; (2) a clinic as defined in Section 1200 of the Health and Safety Code; and (3) a medical office building.

(y)(1) "Mixed-use development" means a development consisting of residential and nonresidential uses that meets any of the following conditions:

(A) At least two-thirds of the new or converted square footage is designated for residential use.

(B) At least 50 percent of the new or converted square footage is designated for residential use and the project meets both of the following:

(i) The project includes at least 500 net new residential units.

(ii) No portion of the project is designated for use as a hotel, motel, bed and breakfast inn, or other transient lodging, except a portion of the project may be designated for use as a residential hotel, as defined in Section 50519 of the Health and Safety Code.

(C) At least 50 percent of the net new or converted square footage is designated for residential use, and the project meets all of the following:

(i) The project includes at least 500 net new residential units.

(ii) The project involves the demolition or conversion of at least 100,000 square feet of nonresidential use to residential use.

(iii) The project demolishes at least 50 percent of the existing nonresidential uses on the site.

(iv) No portion of the project is designated for use as a hotel, motel, bed and breakfast inn, or other transient lodging, except a portion of the project may be designated for use as a residential hotel, as defined in Section 50519 of the Health and Safety Code.

(2) For purposes of this subdivision, nonresidential uses shall not include any heavy industrial, extractive, port, refinery, or hazardous materials uses or designations.

(3) The minimum distance required between any nonresidential uses included in a mixed-use development and any existing off-site residential use shall be determined by state law.

(z) "Public agency" means a public agency as defined in Section 15379 of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations; a responsible agency; a local agency; a state agency; a lead agency; a local agency formation commission; a city; a county; a city and county; a special district; a joint powers authority; or any other governmental authority created under state or local law whether statewide, local, or regional in character.

(aa) "Public participation procedures" means the public participation procedures set forth in Sections 21016, 21018, 21020, 20121, 21023, and 20124 of this chapter.

(bb) "Responsible Agency" means a responsible agency as defined in Section 15381 of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations.

(cc) "State agency" means a state agency as defined in subdivision (a) of Section 8557 of the Government Code and any state body as defined in Section 11121 of the Government Code.

(dd) "State CEQA Guidelines" means Chapter 3 (commencing with Section 15000) of Division 6 of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations.

(ee) "Substantial evidence" means enough relevant information and reasonable inferences from the available information that a fair argument can be made to support a conclusion, even though other conclusions might also be reached.

(ff) "Tribal cultural resource" includes any of the following:

(1) A site, feature, place, cultural landscape, or sacred place, including a sanctified cemetery, Indian cemetery, or burial area of a Consulting Tribe, or an object with cultural value to a Consulting Tribe that is any of the following:

(A) Included or eligible for inclusion in the California Register of Historical Resources or the National Register of Historic Places.

(B) Included in a local register of historical resources as defined in Section 5020.1.

(C) Identified by the Native American Heritage Commission as a sacred place pursuant to Section 5097.94 or 5097.96.

(D) Included in a tribal government register maintained by a Tribal Historic Preservation Officer approved by the Secretary of the Interior pursuant to Section 101 of the federal National Historic Preservation Act (54 U.S.C. Sec. 300101 et seq.).

(2) A cultural landscape that meets the criteria of paragraph (1) to the extent that the landscape is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape.

(3) A historical resource described in Section 21084.1, a unique archaeological resource as defined in subdivision (g) of Section 21083.2, or a "nonunique archaeological resource" as defined in subdivision (h) of Section 21083.2 that conforms with the criteria of paragraph (1).

(gg) "Wildfire risk reduction project" means an activity that reduces wildfire risks to a residential or commercial structure, or both. A "wildfire risk reduction project" includes, but is not limited to, the following: replacing, hardening, or undergrounding electric utility lines, roads, and infrastructure; vegetation management; fuel reduction; home hardening; creating or maintaining fuel breaks and access roads; and reducing fuel loading.

## ARTICLE 8. Construction of Chapter and General Provisions.

### 21029. Construction of Chapter.

(a) It is the policy of the People of the State of California that this chapter should be interpreted and implemented to afford the fullest possible weight to the interest of, and the approval and realization of, essential projects.

(b)(1) It is the intent of the People of the State of California that courts, consistent with generally accepted rules of statutory interpretation, shall not interpret this chapter, this division, or the State CEQA Guidelines in a manner which imposes procedural or substantive requirements upon essential projects beyond those explicitly stated in this chapter, this division, or the State CEQA Guidelines.

(2) It is further the intent of the People of the State of California that this subdivision shall be interpreted and applied by the courts as directed by Section 21083.1, and is *in pari materia* with Section 21083.1 so that, to the maximum extent permitted under the law, this subdivision constrains the authority of the courts to issue a judgement or impose a remedy that is not expressly authorized by this chapter.

**21030. Statewide Concern.**

The People of the State of California hereby declare that streamlining review and approval of essential projects as provided in this chapter is a matter of statewide concern because the adequacy, availability, and affordability of housing, clean energy, water, transportation, broadband Internet, education facilities, public health infrastructure, and public safety infrastructure is insufficient to serve the needs of California's population and economy. Therefore, the State of California hereby occupies the field in the area of review and approval of essential projects as provided in this chapter.

**21031. Statutory References.**

(a) Except as provided in subdivision (b), all references to state statutes or regulations codified outside of this chapter refer to those statutes and regulations as they existed on December 31, 2025 regardless of any subsequent amendment, repeal, sunset, or expiration that takes place after that date.

(b) The reference to Section 218.9 of the Labor Code refers to that section as it existed on January 1, 2026.

**21032. Severability.**

The provisions of this chapter are severable. If any portion, section, subdivision, paragraph, subparagraph, clause, subclause, sentence, phrase, word, or application of this chapter is for any reason held to be invalid by a decision of any court of competent jurisdiction, that decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this chapter. The People of the State of California hereby declare that they would have adopted this chapter and each and every portion, section, subdivision, paragraph, subparagraph, clause, subclause, sentence, phrase, word, and application not declared invalid or unconstitutional without regard to whether any component of this chapter or application thereof would be subsequently declared invalid.

**21033. Effective Date.**

This chapter shall take effect as provided in subdivision (a) of Section 10 of Article II of the California Constitution, and shall be applicable upon such effective date to all pending and future public agency and judicial review and processes for all essential projects.

**21034. Amendments.**

The Legislature may amend this chapter by a statute passed in each house of the Legislature by rollcall vote entered in the journal, two-thirds of the membership concurring, provided that the statute is consistent with, and furthers the purposes of, this chapter. No bill seeking to amend this chapter may be passed or become a statute unless the bill has been printed and distributed to the Members of the Legislature, and published on the Internet, in its final form, for at least 12 business days prior to its passage in either house of the Legislature.

**SECTION 2. Conflicting Measures.**

In the event that this initiative measure and another measure or measures pertaining to the review or approval of essential projects, as defined in this Act, shall appear on the same statewide election ballot, the other measure or measures shall be deemed to be in conflict with this measure. In the event that this initiative measure receives a greater number of affirmative votes, the provisions of this measure shall prevail in their entirety, and the provisions of the other measure or measures shall be null and void.

**SECTION 3. Liberal Construction.**

This Act shall be liberally construed to give effect to its intent and purposes.

**SECTION 4. Legal Defense.**

The purpose of this section is to ensure that the people's precious right of initiative cannot be improperly annulled by state politicians who refuse to defend the will of the voters.

Therefore, if this Act is approved by the voters of the State of California and thereafter subjected to a legal challenge which attempts to limit the scope or application of this Act in any way, or alleges this Act violates any state or federal law in whole or in part, and both the Governor and Attorney General refuse to defend this Act to the fullest extent possible on behalf of the State of California, then the following actions shall be taken:

(a) Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in Chapter 6 (commencing with Section 12500) of Part 2 of Division 3 of Title 2 of the Government Code or any other law, the Attorney General shall appoint independent counsel to faithfully and vigorously defend this Act to the fullest extent possible on behalf of the State of California.

(b) Before appointing or thereafter substituting independent counsel, the Attorney General shall exercise due diligence in determining the qualifications of independent counsel and shall obtain written affirmation from independent counsel that independent counsel will faithfully and vigorously defend this Act to the fullest extent possible. The written affirmation shall be made publicly available immediately upon request.

(c) In order to support the defense of this Act in instances where the Governor and Attorney General fail to do so despite the will of the voters, a continuous appropriation is hereby made from the General Fund to the Controller, without regard to fiscal years, in an amount necessary to cover the costs of retaining independent counsel to faithfully and vigorously defend this Act on behalf of the State of California to the fullest extent possible.

## Proposition 45 Groups in Support

- California Chamber of Commerce (sponsor)
- 21st Century Alliance
- Agricultural Council of California
- American Clean Power California
- American Indian Chamber of Commerce of California
- Asian Industry B2B
- Associated Equipment Distributors
- Associated General Contractors of California (AGC)
- Bay Area Council
- Beaumont Chamber of Commerce
- Breakthrough Institute
- Building Owners and Managers Association – California
- CA/HI State Conference NAACP
- CalBroadband
- California Asian Pacific Chamber of Commerce
- California Assisted Living Association
- California Biomass Energy Alliance
- California Building Industry Association
- California Business Properties Association
- California Business Roundtable
- California Chamber of Commerce
- California Construction and Industry Materials Association
- California Council for Affordable Housing
- California Downtown Association
- California Energy Storage Alliance
- California Hispanic Chambers of Commerce
- California Hospital Association
- California Hydrogen Business Council
- California Hydrogen Coalition
- California League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
- California Taxpayer Protection Committee
- California Water Association
- California Wind Energy Association
- Carlsbad Chamber of Commerce
- Central City Association of Los Angeles
- Central Valley BizFed
- Chino Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Circulate Planning and Policy
- Coalition of Labor, Agriculture & Business of Santa Barbara County
- Common Good
- Corona Chamber of Commerce
- Downtown San Diego Partnership
- El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce
- Environmental Policy Innovation Center
- Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce
- Family Business Association of California
- Fontana Chamber of Commerce
- Fresno Chamber of Commerce
- Gateway Chambers Alliance
- Glendora Chamber of Commerce

- Greater Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Conejo Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Ontario Business Council
- Greater Tehachapi Chamber of Commerce
- Greater West Covina Business Association
- Harbor Association of Industry and Commerce
- Hawthorne Chamber of Commerce
- Hollywood Chamber of Commerce
- Housing Action Coalition
- LA County BizFed
- LA County Taxpayer's Association
- Lake County Chamber of Commerce
- Large-Scale Solar Association
- Leading Builders of America
- LeadingAge California
- Livermore Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Lomita Chamber of Commerce
- Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce
- Menifee Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Mission Viejo Chamber of Commerce
- Moorpark Chamber of Commerce
- Murrieta/Wildomar Chamber of Commerce
- National Action Network Sacramento
- National Diversity Coalition
- New California Coalition
- Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California
- North Orange County Chamber
- North State Building Industry Association
- Oceanside Chamber of Commerce
- Paradise Ridge Chamber of Commerce
- Placer County Taxpayers Association
- Pomona Chamber of Commerce
- Rancho Cordova Area Chamber of Commerce
- Redding Chamber of Commerce
- Redlands Chamber of Commerce
- Redondo Beach Chamber of Commerce
- Rosemead Chamber of Commerce
- Sacramento Asian Pacific Chamber of Commerce
- Sacramento Metro Chamber of Commerce
- Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce
- San Clemente Chamber of Commerce
- San Diego East County Chamber of Commerce
- San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce
- San Dimas Chamber of Commerce
- San Marcos Chamber of Commerce
- Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce
- Sherman Oaks Encino Chamber of Commerce
- Simi Valley Chamber of Commerce
- South Bay Association of Chambers of Commerce
- South County Chambers of Commerce
- South Orange County Economic Coalition

- Southern California Contractors Association
- Southern California Wine Country Economic Development Coalition
- Supply Chain Federation
- Temecula Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Torrance Area Chamber of Commerce
- Tri-County Chambers Alliance
- United Chambers of Commerce of the San Fernando Valley
- United Contractors
- Upland Chamber of Commerce
- US Telecom
- Valley Industry and Commerce Association
- West Ventura County Business Alliance
- Western Municipal Water District
- Westside Council of Chambers of Commerce
- Wine Institute
- Wireless Infrastructure Association

## Proposition 45 Groups in Opposition

- 350 Bay Area
- 350 Conejo / San Fernando Valley
- 350 Contra Costa Action
- 350 Humboldt
- 2100iff Strategies
- Advocates for the Environment
- American River Conservancy
- American River Trees
- Anza Borrego Foundation
- APEN Action
- Arroyos & Foothills Conservancy
- As You Sow
- ASK Environmental, San Diego
- Azul
- Ban SUP (Single Use Plastic)
- Bay Area—System Change not Climate Change
- Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association
- Beyond Pesticides
- Beyond Plastics
- Biofuelwatch
- Brentwood Alliance of Canyons & Hillsides
- California Coastal Protection Network
- California Coastkeeper Alliance
- California Council of Land Trusts
- California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA) Action
- California Land Watch
- California Native Plant Society
- California Native Plant Society, Alta Peak Chapter
- California Nurses for Environmental Health and Justice
- California River Watch
- California Sportfishing Protection Alliance
- California Wildlife Foundation/California Oaks
- Californians Against Waste
- Californians for Safe Energy Storage
- Californians for Western Wilderness
- CalWild
- Canyon Back Alliance
- Center for Biological Diversity
- Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice
- Center for Environmental Health
- Center for Food Safety
- Center for Public Environmental Oversight
- Citizens Advocating for Roblar Rural Quality (CARRQ)
- Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife (CLAW)
- Citizens for the Preservation of Parks & Beaches
- Citizens' Climate Lobby
- Clean Air Coalition of North Whittier and Avocado Heights
- Clean Water Action
- CleanEarth4Kids.org
- Cleveland National Forest Foundation
- Climate Action California
- Climate Action Campaign at Humboldt UU Fellowship
- Climate Reality Project Orange Co Chapter
- Coalition for a Beautiful Los Angeles
- Coast Action Group
- Coastal Corridor Alliance
- Coastal Ranches Conservancy
- Comite Civico Del Valle, Inc.
- Committees for Land, Air, Water and Species (CLAWS)
- Communities for a Better Environment
- Conservation Biology Institute
- Courage California
- Defend Them All
- Defenders of Wildlife
- Dharma Cloud Technology
- Earthjustice
- Earthworks

- Elders Climate Action (ECA) Northern California (NorCal) Chapter
- Elders Climate Action (ECA) Southern California (SoCal) Chapter
- Elfin Forest / Harmony Grove Town Council
- Endangered Habitats League
- Environmental Action Committee of West Marin
- Environmental Center of San Diego
- Environmental Council of Sacramento
- Environmental Defense Center
- Environmental Justice Coalition for Water
- Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC)
- Families Advocating For Chemical and Toxics Safety
- Food & Water Watch
- Food Access LA
- Forest Unlimited
- Forests Forever
- Fossil Free California
- Fresh Air Vallejo
- Fridays For Future Palo Alto
- Friends of Griffith Park
- Friends of Gualala River
- Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks
- Friends of Jenner Creek
- Friends of Lafferty Park
- Friends of Loma Alta Creek
- Friends of Rose Canyon
- Friends of Rose Creek
- Friends of the Eel River
- Friends of the Mark West Watershed
- Friends of the River
- Golden Gate Bird Alliance
- Green Foothills
- Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice
- Greenbelt Alliance
- Greenfield Walking Group
- GreenLA Coalition
- Greenspace the Cambria Land Trust
- GreenSpacesMV
- Habitat 2020
- Hills For Everyone
- Homies Organizing the Mission to Empower Youth (HOMEY)
- Humboldt Waterkeeper
- Imperial Valley Equity and Justice
- Indivisible Alameda
- Indivisible CA Green Team
- Indivisible East Contra Costa
- Indivisible Monterey
- Indivisible Santa Cruz County
- Keep Coyote Creek Beautiful
- Keep Tahoe Blue
- Klamath Forest Alliance
- Laguna Greenbelt, Inc.
- Learning Disabilities Association of California
- Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability
- Little Manila Rising
- Long Beach Alliance for Clean Energy
- Los Angeles Audubon Society
- Los Angeles Climate Reality Project
- Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust
- Los Angeles Waterkeeper
- Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust
- Los Padres ForestWatch
- Madrone Audubon Society
- Marin Baylands Advocates
- Marin Conservation League
- Morongo Basin Conservation Association
- Mothers Out Front, Silicon Valley
- Mount Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center
- Mountain Area Preservation
- Napa-Solano Audubon
- National Wildlife Federation
- Non-Toxic Communities
- Non-Toxic Neighborhoods
- North Coast Rivers Alliance
- NOW (Neighbors of West County)
- O.W.L. Foundation

- Oil and Gas Action Network
- Orchard City Indivisible Climate Justice
- Oswit Land Trust
- Our City SF
- Pacific Forest Trust
- Physicians for Social Responsibility — Los Angeles
- Planning and Conservation League
- Preserve Calavera
- Preserve Orange County
- Protect Monterey County
- Protect San Benito County
- Public Interest Coalition
- Resource Renewal Institute
- River Otter Ecology Project
- Riverside Neighbors Opposing Warehouses (R-NOW)
- Robert Redford Conservancy Pitzer College
- Russian Riverkeeper
- Sacramento Area Creeks Council
- San Bruno Mountain Watch
- San Diego Bird Alliance
- San Francisco Bay Physicians for Social Responsibility
- SanDiego350
- Santa Clara Valley Bird Alliance
- Santa Clarita Organization for Planning and the Environment (SCOPE)
- Santa Cruz Climate Action Network
- Save Mount Diablo
- Save Temescal Valley Now
- Save the Bay
- Save the Park
- Save the Sonoma Coast
- SD-SQUEL
- Sequoia Riverlands Trust
- SHIFT Bay Area
- Sierra Club California
- Sierra County Land Trust
- Sierra Watch
- Silicon Valley Youth Climate Action
- SoCal 350 Climate Action
- Solano County Orderly Growth Committee
- Sonoma County Climate Activist Network (SoCoCAN!)
- Sonoma Ecology Center
- Sonoma Land Trust
- Sonoma Mountain Preservation
- SPRAWLDEF
- Stop OAK Expansion Coalition
- Sunflower Alliance
- Surfrider Foundation
- The Chaparral Lands Conservancy
- The Climate Alliance
- The Escondido Creek Conservancy
- The Last Plastic Straw
- The SummerTree Institute
- The Urban Wildlands Group
- Third Act SF Bay Area
- Turtle Island Restoration Network
- United Neighborhoods for Los Angeles (UN4LA)
- Verdant Venice Group
- Waterbird Habitat Project
- We Advocate Thorough Environmental Review
- West Adams Heritage Association
- West Berkeley Alliance for Clean Air and Safe Jobs
- West Sonoma County Rural Alliance
- Western Center on Law & Poverty
- Western Watersheds Project
- Wholly H2O
- Wilderness Within
- YardSmartMarin
- Youth United for Community Action

REPRESENTING CALIFORNIA'S
RURAL COUNTIES

**To:** Members of the RCRC Board of Directors

**From:** Tracy Rhine, Senior Policy Advocate

**Date:** August 11, 2026

**Re:** Proposition 1: Housing Affordability Bond - **ACTION**

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## Summary

This memo provides an overview of Proposition 1 (Senate Bill 417 (Limon), Chapter 16, statutes of 2026), which authorizes the issuance of $11.25 billion in General Obligation (GO) bonds for housing purposes. The measure will be placed on the November 3, 2026 statewide ballot for consideration.

## Background

California has historically issued GO bonds, those that require voter approval, to finance infrastructure projects, such as roads, bridges and levees. According to the California State Treasurer, as of July 1, 2026, California had $72.1 billion outstanding GO bonds issued, with another $37.8 billion in bonds authorized, but unissued.

Over the last eight years California voters have approved over $10 billion in GO bonds for housing purposes. In 2018 voters approved Proposition 1 which authorized $4 billion for veteran housing programs, and just last year voters narrowly approved another $6.38 billion for veteran housing and homelessness prevention programs. According to the California Budget & Policy Center California, even though the State has nearly tripled the number of new affordable homes it funds, California still needs more than 2.5 million new homes, including at least one million homes that are affordable to lower-income households[1].

## Issue

Proposition 1 provides for the issuance of $11.25 billion in GO bonds for funding of nine established affordable housing programs, the CalVet Loan Program, and University of California and California State University student housing.

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[1] The California Budget & Policy Center, *Proposition1: California's Veterans and Affordable Housing Bond Report*, July 2026.

Specifically, bond proceed distribution is outlined below.

| Program | Purpose of Program | Funding Amount |
|---|---|---|
| Multifamily Housing Program (MPH) | Construct, rehabilitate and preserve rental housing for persons with incomes of up to 60% of area median income. Of the allocation:<br>- $5.1 billion for MPH<br>- $1.15 billion for supportive housing through MPH<br>- $750 million for the Portfolio Reinvestment Program through MPH<br>- $200 million Community Anti-Displacement and Preservation Program | $7.2 billion |
| Affordable Student Housing Projects | To be split evenly between the University of California dn the California State University. | $350 million |
| Infill Infrastructure Grant Program of 2019 | Construction and rehabilitation of high density, affordable and mixed income housing in infill designated locations. | $500 million |
| My Home Purchase Downpayment Assistance Program | Assist low- and moderate – income homebuyers qualify for home purchase. | $500 million |
| Joe Serna, Jr. Farmworker Housing Grant Fund | Finance the new construction or rehabilitation for housing of agricultural employees and their families. | $450 million |
| Local Housing Trust Fund Matching Grant Program | Competitive grants and loans to local housing trust funds for affordable housing. | $200 million |
| CalHome Program | Forgivable loans to assist development of multiple home ownership units, including manufactured homes. | $600 million |
| CalVet Home Loan Program | Low-cost funding of loans for eligible military veterans. | $1.25 billion |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Tribal Grant Program | Finances housing and housing-related activities to enable tribes to rebuild and reconstitute their communities. | $200 million |

According to the legislative fiscal analysis of SB 417, it is estimated that total principal and interest costs to pay off the bonds are approximately $17.39 billion, with General Fund debt service payments of approximately $580 million annually[2]. According to proponents of the ballot measure, the new bond could produce more than 40,000 new affordable homes for lower-income households, preserving more than 5,500 existing units and creating more than 53,000 constructions job.

CSAC's Housing, Land Use and Transportation Committee adopted a "Support" position on Proposition 1, and the proposal now moves forward to the Executive Committee and, ultimately, the full Board for consideration. Cal Cities' full Board likewise voted to support the measure.

**Staff Recommendation**

RCRC staff recommends the RCRC Board of Directors adopt a "No Position" position on Proposition 1. RCRC Policy Principles state that the organization "supports state programs to finance and ensure affordable housing projects are completed and made available to rural residents" but is silent on the funding sources of those programs.

**Attachment**

- Text of Proposition 1 (Senate Bill 417)

[2] Senate Floor Analysis of SB 417

Ch. 16
U.

**Senate Bill No. 417**

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Passed the Senate JUN 25 2026

Secretary of the Senate

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Passed the Assembly JUN 25 2026

Sue Parker
Chief Clerk of the Assembly

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This bill was received by the Governor this 25th day of June, 2026, at 12:30 o'clock p.M.

Samuel Miller
Private Secretary of the Governor

CHAPTER ________

An act to add Part 16.1 (commencing with Section 54050) to Division 31 of the Health and Safety Code, and to add Article 5ab (commencing with Section 998.750) to Chapter 6 of Division 4 of the Military and Veterans Code, relating to housing, by providing the funds necessary therefor through an election for the issuance and sale of bonds of the State of California and for the handling and disposition of those funds, and declaring the urgency thereof, to take effect immediately.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 417, Limón. The Veterans and Affordable Housing Bond Act of 2026.

Under existing law, there are programs providing assistance for, among other things, emergency housing, multifamily housing, farmworker housing, home ownership for very low and low-income households, and downpayment assistance for first-time home buyers. Existing law also authorizes the issuance of bonds in specified amounts pursuant to the State General Obligation Bond Law and requires that proceeds from the sale of these bonds be used to finance various existing housing programs, capital outlay related to infill development, brownfield cleanup that promotes infill development, and housing-related parks. Existing law, the Veterans and Affordable Housing Bond Act of 2018, authorized, the issuance of bonds in the amount of $4,000,000,000 to finance various existing housing programs, as well as infill infrastructure financing and affordable housing matching grant programs, as well as financing for a specified program for farm, home, and mobilehome purchase assistance for veterans, pursuant to the State General Obligation Bond Law.

This bill would enact the Veterans and Affordable Housing Bond Act of 2026, which, if adopted, would authorize the issuance of bonds in the amount of $11,250,000,000, pursuant to the State General Obligation Bond Law. Of the proceeds from the sale of these bonds, $10,000,000,000 would be used to finance programs to fund affordable rental housing and home ownership programs, including, among others, the Multifamily Housing Program, the

CalHome Program, and the Joe Serna, Jr. Farmworker Housing Grant Program, and $1,250,000,000 would be used to provide additional funding for the above-described program for farm, home, and mobilehome purchase assistance for veterans, as provided.

This bill would provide for submission of the bond act to the voters at the November 3, 2026, statewide general election, in accordance with specified law.

This bill would declare that it is to take effect immediately as an urgency statute.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

SECTION 1. This act shall be known, and may be cited, as the Veterans and Affordable Housing Bond Act of 2026.

SEC. 2. Part 16.1 (commencing with Section 54050) is added to Division 31 of the Health and Safety Code, to read:

## PART 16.1. VETERANS AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING BOND ACT OF 2026

### Chapter 1. General Provisions

54050. Together with Article 5ab (commencing with Section 998.750) of Chapter 6 of Division 4 of the Military and Veterans Code, this part shall be known, and may be cited, as the Veterans and Affordable Housing Bond Act of 2026.

54051. This part shall only become operative upon adoption by the voters at the November 3, 2026, statewide general election.

54052. For purposes of this part, "fund" means the Affordable Housing Bond Act Trust Fund of 2026 created pursuant to Section 54054.

### Chapter 2. Affordable Housing Bond Act Trust Fund of 2026 and Program

54054. (a) The Affordable Housing Bond Act Trust Fund of 2026 is hereby created within the State Treasury. It is the intent of the Legislature that the proceeds of bonds issued and sold pursuant to this part, exclusive of refunding bonds issued pursuant to Section 54076, be deposited into the fund and used to fund affordable rental housing and home ownership programs as described in this chapter.

(b) The proceeds of bonds issued and sold pursuant to this part for the purposes specified in this chapter shall be allocated in the following manner:

(1) Five billion one hundred million dollars ($5,100,000,000) to be deposited into the Housing Rehabilitation Loan Fund established pursuant to Section 50661 to be used for the Multifamily Housing Program authorized by Chapter 6.7 (commencing with Section 50675) of Part 2. At least 10 percent of assisted units in each development receiving these funds shall be affordable to extremely low income households.

(2) One billion one hundred fifty million dollars ($1,150,000,000) to be deposited into the Housing Rehabilitation Loan Fund established pursuant to Section 50661 to be used for supportive housing, as described in Section 50675.14, pursuant to the Multifamily Housing Program authorized by Chapter 6.7 (commencing with Section 50675) of Part 2. The administering entity shall offer capitalized operating subsidy reserves for supportive housing units in developments receiving these funds.

(A) (i) Up to 15 percent of this amount shall be made available as grants to eligible entities specified in Section 50675.1.3 to acquire capital assets for the acquisition, conversion, or rehabilitation of interim housing to permanent housing, including scattered site projects for persons who are homeless, chronically homeless, or are at risk of homelessness, as defined in Part 578.3 of Title 24 of the Code of Federal Regulations, the purchase of affordability covenants and restrictions for units, relocation costs for individuals who are being displaced as a result of rehabilitation of existing units, and capitalized operating subsidies for units purchased, converted, or altered with funds provided by this section.

(ii) Any program or project that uses funds received for any of the purposes described in this subparagraph shall be subject to the regulatory streamlining provisions of Section 50675.1.5 of the Health and Safety Code and subdivision (i) of Section 50675.1.3.

(iii) Any conflict between the other requirements of the Multifamily Housing Program (Chapter 6.7 (commencing with Section 50675) of Part 2) and this paragraph shall be resolved in favor of this paragraph, as may be set forth in the guidelines authorized pursuant to Section 54077.

(B) (i) One hundred fifty million dollars ($150,000,000) of this sum shall be used for youth housing.

(ii) For purposes of this subdivision, "youth housing" means housing for current or former foster youth, homeless minors or youth, or youth at risk of homelessness, including, but not limited to, housing that assists them develop the skills and resources they need to make a successful transition to independent, self-sufficient adulthood.

(iii) Funds made available under this subparagraph shall be used only for the capital costs of developing, acquiring, rehabilitating, or preserving youth housing, and shall not be used to fund the operation or delivery of services.

(iv) Any funds not encumbered for the purpose of this subparagraph within three years of availability shall revert for general use in the Multifamily Housing Program authorized by Chapter 6.7 (commencing with Section 50675) of Part 2.

(3) Seven hundred fifty million dollars ($750,000,000) to be appropriated by the Legislature, to the program commonly known as the Portfolio Reinvestment Program established pursuant to Chapter 5.5 (commencing with Section 50606) of Part 2. Any funds not encumbered for the purposes of this paragraph by November 3, 2036, shall revert for general use in the Multifamily Housing Program authorized by Chapter 6.7 (commencing with Section 50675) of Part 2.

(4) Two hundred million dollars ($200,000,000) to be appropriated by the Legislature, to a program to fund the acquisition and rehabilitation of unrestricted housing units and attach long-term affordability restrictions on the housing units, while safeguarding against the displacement of current residents. Any funds not allocated by the administering entity within the first three years shall be made available by the administering entity for the Multifamily Housing Program (Chapter 6.7 (commencing with Section 50675) of Part 2).

(5) Six hundred million dollars ($600,000,000) to be deposited into the Self-Help Housing Fund established pursuant to Section 50697.1. The moneys in the fund shall be available for the CalHome Program authorized by Chapter 6 (commencing with Section 50650) of Part 2, to provide direct, forgivable loans to

assist development projects involving multiple home ownership units, including single-family subdivision, for self-help mortgage assistance programs, and for manufactured homes. These funds may also be expended for any authorized purpose of the program. Any funds not encumbered for the purposes of this paragraph by November 3, 2036, shall revert for general use in the Multifamily Housing Program authorized by Chapter 6.7 (commencing with Section 50675) of Part 2.

(6) Five hundred million dollars ($500,000,000) to be deposited into the Home Purchase Assistance Fund established pursuant to Section 51342. Notwithstanding Section 13340 of the Government Code and Section 50697.1, these funds are hereby continuously appropriated to the California Housing Finance Agency without regard to fiscal years, for purposes of the home purchase assistance program established pursuant to Chapter 6.8 (commencing with Section 51341) of Part 3.

(7) Four hundred fifty million dollars ($450,000,000) to be deposited into the Joe Serna, Jr. Farmworker Housing Grant Fund, established pursuant to Section 50517.5; to fund grants or loans, or both, for the construction or rehabilitation of housing for agricultural employees and their families or for the acquisition of manufactured housing as part of a program to address and remedy the impact of current and potential displacement of farmworker families from existing labor camps, mobilehome parks, or other housing. These funds may also be expended for any authorized purpose of the program. These funds may also be used to provide technical assistance pursuant to Section 54007. Any funds not encumbered for the purposes of this paragraph by November 3, 2036, shall revert for general use in the Multifamily Housing Program authorized by Chapter 6.7 (commencing with Section 50675) of Part 2.

(8) Two hundred million dollars($200,000,000) to be appropriated by the Legislature, to the Tribal Housing Grant Program established pursuant to Chapter 6.4 (commencing with Section 50651) to finance housing and housing-related activities that will enable tribes to rebuild and reconstitute their communities. Any funds not encumbered for the purposes of this paragraph by November 3, 2036, shall revert for general use in the Multifamily Housing Program authorized by Chapter 6.7 (commencing with Section 50675) of Part 2.

(9) Five hundred million dollars ($500,000,000) for the Infill Infrastructure Grant Program of 2019 established pursuant to Section 53559 of the Health and Safety Code for infill incentive grants to assist in the new construction and rehabilitation of infrastructure that supports high-density affordable and mixed-income housing in locations designated as infill. Any funds not encumbered for the purposes of this paragraph by November 3, 2036, shall revert for general use in the Multifamily Housing Program authorized by Chapter 6.7 (commencing with Section 50675) of Part 2.

(10) Three hundred fifty million dollars ($350,000,000) to be appropriated by the Legislature for new affordable student housing projects. This funding shall be split evenly among the University of California and the California State University. Funded student housing projects shall meet the terms specified in subdivision (f) of Section 17201 of the Education Code. For these projects, the University of California and California State University shall meet the accountability and reporting requirements specified in subdivisions (i) and (o) of Section 17201 of the Education Code.

(11) Two hundred million dollars ($200,000,000) to be deposited in the Affordable Housing Innovation Fund established pursuant to subparagraph (F) of paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) of Section 53545. Moneys in the fund shall be available, upon appropriation by the Legislature, pursuant to the Local Housing Trust Fund Matching Grant Program established pursuant to Section 50842.2 to fund competitive grants or loans to local housing trust funds that develop, own, lend, or invest in affordable housing and be used to create pilot programs to demonstrate innovative, cost-saving approaches to creating or preserving affordable housing. Local housing trust funds shall be derived on an ongoing basis from private contribution or governmental sources that are not otherwise restricted in use for housing programs. These funds may also be expended for any authorized purpose of this program. Any funds not encumbered for the purposes of this paragraph within three years of availability shall be reverted for general use in the Multifamily Housing Program authorized by Chapter 6.7 (commencing with Section 50675) of Part 2, unless the Department of Housing and Community Development determines that the funds should revert sooner due to diminished demand.

(12) Notwithstanding paragraphs (1) to (11), inclusive, the Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency or its successor and its administering departments may, upon appropriation by the Legislature, align or streamline the programs funded pursuant to this subdivision to improve efficiency and accelerate the deployment of funds, provided that expenditures remain consistent with the purposes and eligible uses approved by the voters and the Legislature.

54056. (a) The Legislature may, from time to time, amend any law related to programs to which funds are, or have been, allocated pursuant to this chapter for the purposes of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of those programs or to further the goals of those programs.

(b) The Legislature may amend this chapter in order to reallocate the proceeds of bonds issued and sold pursuant to this part among the programs to which funds are to be allocated pursuant to this chapter as necessary to effectively promote the development of affordable housing in this state.

(c) The Department of Housing and Community Development or administering entity may disburse any funds made available to housing development projects pursuant to this chapter during the construction period.

## Chapter 3. Fiscal Provisions

54060. Bonds in the total amount of ten billion dollars ($10,000,000,000), exclusive of refunding bonds issued pursuant to Section 54076, or so much thereof as is necessary as determined by the committee, are hereby authorized to be issued and sold for carrying out the purposes expressed in this part and to reimburse the General Obligation Bond Expense Revolving Fund pursuant to Section 16724.5 of the Government Code. Any bond, when sold, issued, and delivered, shall be and constitute a valid and binding general obligation of the state, and the full faith and credit of the state is hereby pledged for the punctual payment of both principal of, and interest on, those bonds as the principal and interest become due and payable.

54062. The bonds authorized by this part shall be prepared, executed, issued, sold, paid, retired, and redeemed as provided in the State General Obligation Bond Law (Chapter 4 (commencing with Section 16720) of Part 3 of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code), except subdivisions (a) and (b) of Section 16727 of the Government Code, and all of the provisions of that law as amended from time to time apply to the bonds and to this part, except as provided in Section 54078, and are hereby incorporated in this part as though set forth in full in this part.

54064. (a) Solely for the purpose of authorizing the issuance and sale, pursuant to the State General Obligation Bond Law, of the bonds authorized by this part, the Housing Finance Committee created by Section 53524 is continued in existence. For the purposes of this part, the Housing Finance Committee is "the committee" as that term is used in the State General Obligation Bond Law.

(b) References to the "board" as used in this part and in the State General Obligation Bond Law, shall mean the Housing Development and Finance Committee. This authority may be delegated to the Department of Housing and Community Development or the California Housing Finance Agency for programs they administer. The Department of Housing and Community Development is designated the "board" for programs administered by the department, and the California Housing Finance Agency is the "board" for programs administered by the agency.

54066. Upon request of the board stating that funds are needed for purposes of this part, the committee shall determine by resolution whether or not it is necessary or desirable to issue and sell bonds, and, if so, the amount of bonds to be issued and sold. Successive issues of bonds may be authorized and sold to carry out those actions progressively, and it is not necessary that all of the bonds authorized to be issued be sold at any one time. Bonds may bear interest subject to federal income tax.

54068. There shall be collected annually, in the same manner and at the same time as other state revenue is collected, in addition to the ordinary revenues of the state, a sum in the amount required to pay the principal of, and interest on, the bonds each year. It is the duty of all officers charged by law with any duty in regard to the collections of state revenues to do and perform each and every act that is necessary to collect that additional sum.

54070. Notwithstanding Section 13340 of the Government Code, there is hereby continuously appropriated from the General

Fund in the State Treasury, for the purposes of this part, an amount that will equal the total of both of the following:

(a) The sum annually necessary to pay the principal of, and interest on, bonds issued and sold pursuant to this part, as the principal and interest become due and payable.

(b) The sum that is necessary to carry out Section 54074, appropriated without regard to fiscal years.

54072. The board may request the Pooled Money Investment Board to make a loan from the Pooled Money Investment Account, in accordance with Section 16312 of the Government Code, for purposes of this part. The amount of the request shall not exceed the amount of the unsold bonds that the committee has, by resolution, authorized to be sold, excluding any refunding bonds authorized pursuant to Section 54076, less any amount loaned pursuant to this section and not yet repaid and any amount withdrawn from the General Fund pursuant to Section 54074 and not yet returned to the General Fund. The board shall execute any documents as required by the Pooled Money Investment Board to obtain and repay the loan. Any amount loaned shall be deposited into the fund to be allocated in accordance with this part.

54074. For purposes of carrying out this part, the Director of Finance may authorize the withdrawal from the General Fund of an amount not to exceed the amount of the unsold bonds that the committee has, by resolution, authorized to be sold, excluding any refunding bonds authorized pursuant to Section 54076, less any amount loaned pursuant to Section 54072 and not yet repaid and any amount withdrawn from the General Fund pursuant to this section and not yet returned to the General Fund. Any amounts withdrawn shall be deposited into the fund to be allocated in accordance with this part. Any moneys made available under this section shall be returned to the General Fund, plus the interest that the amounts would have earned in the Pooled Money Investment Account, from moneys received from the sale of bonds that would otherwise be deposited into that fund.

54076. The bonds issued and sold pursuant to this part may be refunded in accordance with Article 6 (commencing with Section 16780) of Chapter 4 of Part 3 of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code. Approval by the voters of the sale and issuance of bonds as described in this part includes approval of the sale and issuance of bonds issued to refund bonds issued pursuant to this part, including any prior issued refunding bonds. A bond refunded with the proceeds of a refunding bond as authorized by this section may be legally defeased to the extent permitted by law in the manner and to the extent set forth in the resolution, as amended from time to time, authorizing that refunded bond.

54076.5. Proceeds of the bonds, in an amount not to exceed the principal amount of bonds authorized to be issued by the Veterans and Affordable Housing Bond Act of 2026 (excluding any refunding bonds issued pursuant to Section 54076), are expected to be and may be used to reimburse any lawfully available source used to pay costs of projects or programs (including funds of particular state departments or agencies that may be spent on costs of the projects or programs) authorized pursuant to the Veterans and Affordable Housing Bond Act of 2026 and paid after November 3, 2026, provided, however, any costs that are to be reimbursed from proceeds of bonds shall not have been paid from the proceeds of any other indebtedness unless that prior indebtedness will be retired with the proceeds of the bonds.

54077. To implement the funding detailed in Section 54054, the administering entity may adopt guidelines establishing requirements for administration of its financing programs. The guidelines are not subject to Chapter 3.5 (commencing with Section 11340) of Part 1 of Division 3 of Title 2 of the Government Code.

54078. Notwithstanding any provisions in the State General Obligation Bond Law, the maturity date of any bond authorized by this part shall not be later than 35 years from the date of issuance of the bond.

54080. The proceeds from the sale of bonds authorized by this part are not "proceeds of taxes" as that term is used in Article XIII B of the California Constitution, and the disbursement of these proceeds is not subject to the limitations imposed by that article.

54082. Notwithstanding any provision of the State General Obligation Bond Law with regard to the proceeds from the sale of bonds authorized by this part that are subject to investment under Article 4 (commencing with Section 16470) of Chapter 3 of Part 2 of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code, the Treasurer may maintain a separate account for investment earnings.

54083. Notwithstanding any other provision of this part, or of the State General Obligation Bond Law, if the Treasurer sells bonds pursuant to this chapter that include a bond counsel opinion to the effect that the interest on the bonds is excluded from gross income for federal tax purposes under designated conditions or is otherwise entitled to any federal tax advantage, the Treasurer may maintain separate accounts for the investment of bond proceeds and for the earnings and investment of earnings on those proceeds. The Treasurer may use or direct the use of those proceeds or earnings to pay any rebate, penalty, or other payment required under federal law or take any other action with respect to the investment and use of those bond proceeds required or desirable under federal law to maintain the tax exempt status of those bonds and to obtain any other advantage under federal law on behalf of the funds of this state.

54084. (a) Subject to subdivision (b), all moneys derived from premiums and accrued interest on bonds sold pursuant to this part shall be transferred to the General Fund as a credit to expenditures for bond interest.

(b) Amounts derived from premiums may be reserved and used to pay the costs of bond issuance before transfer to the General Fund.

## Chapter 4. Accountability

54088. The administering entity shall publish in an annual report detailed information regarding the investments resulting from this bond pursuant to Section 50408 of the Health and Safety Code.

SEC. 3. Article 5ab (commencing with Section 998.750) is added to Chapter 6 of Division 4 of the Military and Veterans Code, to read:

## Article 5ab. The Veterans and Affordable Housing Bond Act of 2026

998.750. Together with Part 16.1 (commencing with Section 54050) of Division 31 of the Health and Safety Code, this article shall be known, and may be cited, as the Veterans and Affordable Housing Bond Act of 2026.

998.751. (a) (1) The State General Obligation Bond Law (Chapter 4 (commencing with Section 16720) of Part 3 of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code), as it may be amended from time to time, is adopted for the purpose of the preparation, execution, issuance, sale, retirement, redemption, and repayment of, and otherwise providing with respect to, the bonds authorized to be issued by this article, and the provisions of that law are included in this article, as though set out in full in this article, except for both of the following:

(A) Subdivisions (a) and (b) of Section 16727 and subdivision (a) of Section 16755 of the State General Obligation Bond Law shall not apply.

(B) Paragraph (1) of subdivision (c) of Section 16753 of the State General Obligation Bond law shall be replaced in full by the following: "The Treasurer shall require that a successful bidder in a competitive sale or underwriter in a negotiated sale provide a good faith deposit of at least one-half of 1 percent of the principal amount of the bonds for which the bidder is the successful bidder or for which an underwriter submits a proposal. The good faith deposit shall be in the amount that is reasonably determined by the Treasurer at least one day prior to a competitive sale or negotiated sale of bonds, as applicable. The Treasurer shall specify the form of the deposit, which may be a cashier's check, a surety bond, a wire transfer of funds, or a combination thereof. The deposit shall not bear interest."

(2) All references in this article to "herein" refer both to this article and that law as incorporated herein.

(b) For purposes of the State General Obligation Bond Law, the Department of Veterans Affairs is designated the "board."

998.752. As used herein, the following terms have the following meanings:

(a) "Board" means the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(b) "Bond" means a veterans bond, a state general obligation bond, issued pursuant to this article adopting the provisions of the State General Obligation Bond Law as provided herein.

(c) "Bond act" means this article authorizing the issuance of state general obligation bonds and adopting the State General Obligation Bond Law by reference.

(d) "Committee" means the Veterans' Finance Committee of 1943 established by Section 991.

(e) "Fund" means the Veterans' Farm and Home Building Fund of 1943 established by Section 988.

(f) "Payment Fund" means the Veterans' Bonds Payment Fund established by Section 988.6.

998.753. For the purpose of creating a fund to provide farm and home aid for veterans in accordance with the Veterans' Farm and Home Purchase Act of 1974 (Article 3.1 (commencing with Section 987.50)), and of all acts amendatory thereof and supplemental thereto, the committee may create a debt or debts, liability or liabilities, of the State of California, in the aggregate amount of not more than one billion two hundred fifty million dollars ($1,250,000,000), not including the amount of any refunding bonds issued in accordance with Section 998.762, in the manner provided herein.

998.754. (a) All bonds authorized by this article, when sold, issued, and delivered, shall be and constitute a valid and legally binding general obligation of the State of California, and the full faith and credit of the State of California is hereby pledged for the punctual payment of both principal of and interest on the bonds as the principal and interest become due and payable.

(b) There shall be collected annually, in the same manner and at the same time as other state revenue is collected, the sum, in addition to the ordinary revenues of the state, as is required to pay the principal of, and interest on, these bonds becoming due and payable each year. It is the duty of all officers charged by law with any duty in regard to the collection of state revenues to do and perform each and every act that is necessary to collect that additional sum.

(c) On the dates on which funds are to be remitted pursuant to Section 16676 of the Government Code for the payment of debt service on the bonds in each fiscal year, there shall be transferred to the Payment Fund to pay the debt service all of the moneys in the fund, not in excess of the amount of debt service then due and payable. If the moneys transferred on the remittance dates is less than the debt service then due and payable, the balance remaining unpaid shall be transferred to the General Fund out of the fund as soon as it shall become available, together with interest thereon from the remittance date until paid, at the same rate of interest as borne by the bonds, compounded semiannually. Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, this subdivision shall apply to all veterans' farm and home purchase bond acts pursuant to this chapter. This subdivision does not grant any lien on the fund, the Payment Fund, or the moneys therein to the holders of any bonds issued under this article. For the purposes of this subdivision, "debt service" means the principal (whether due at maturity, by redemption, or acceleration), premium, if any, or interest payable on any date with respect to any series of bonds. This subdivision shall not apply, however, in the case of any debt service that is payable from the proceeds of any refunding bonds.

998.755. Notwithstanding Section 13340 of the Government Code, there is hereby continuously appropriated from the General Fund in the State Treasury, for purposes of this article, without regard to fiscal year, a sum of moneys that will equal both of the following:

(a) That sum annually necessary to pay the principal of, and the interest on, the bonds issued and sold as provided herein, as that principal and interest become due and payable.

(b) That sum necessary to carry out Section 998.756.

998.756. For the purposes of this article, the Director of Finance may authorize the withdrawal from the General Fund of a sum of moneys not to exceed the amount of the unsold bonds which have been authorized by the committee to be sold pursuant to this article, excluding any refunding bonds authorized pursuant to Section 998.762, less any amount loaned pursuant to Section 998.757 and not yet repaid and any amount withdrawn pursuant to this section and not yet returned to the General Fund. Any sums withdrawn shall be deposited into the fund. Any moneys made available under this section to the board shall be returned by the board to the General Fund, plus the interest that the amounts would have earned in the Pooled Money Investment Account, from the sale of bonds for the purpose of carrying out this article.

998.757. The board may request the Pooled Money Investment Board to make a loan from the Pooled Money Investment Account, in accordance with Section 16312 of the Government Code, for the purposes of carrying out this article, less any amount withdrawn pursuant to Section 998.756 and not yet returned to the General Fund. The amount of the request shall not exceed the amount of unsold bonds which the committee has, by resolution, authorized to be sold for the purpose of carrying out this article, excluding any refunding bonds authorized pursuant to Section 998.762, less any amount loaned pursuant to this section and not yet repaid and any amount withdrawn pursuant to Section 998.756 and not yet returned to the General Fund. The board shall execute whatever documents are required by the Pooled Money Investment Board to obtain and repay the loan. Any amounts loaned shall be deposited into the fund to be allocated by the board in accordance with this article.

998.758. Upon request of the board, supported by a statement of its plans and projects approved by the Governor, the committee shall determine by resolution whether or not it is necessary or desirable to issue any bonds authorized pursuant to this article in order to carry out the board's plans and projects, and, if so, the amount of bonds to be issued and sold. Successive issues of bonds may be authorized and sold to carry out these plans and projects, progressively, and it is not necessary that all the bonds be issued or sold at any one time.

998.759. (a) As long as any bonds authorized pursuant to this article are outstanding, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, at the close of each fiscal year, require a survey of the financial condition of the Division of Farm and Home Purchases, together with a projection of the division's operations, to be made by an independent public accountant of recognized standing. The results of each survey and projection shall be reported in writing by the public accountant to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the California Veterans Board, the appropriate policy committees dealing with veterans affairs in the Senate and the Assembly, and the committee.

(b) The Division of Farm and Home Purchases shall reimburse the public accountant for these services out of any moneys that the division may have available on deposit with the Treasurer.

998.760. (a) The Treasurer shall issue and sell the bonds authorized by this article in the amount determined by the committee to be necessary and desirable pursuant to Section 998.758. The bonds shall be issued and sold upon the terms and conditions specified in a resolution to be adopted by the committee pursuant to Section 16731 of the Government Code.

(b) Whenever the committee deems it necessary for an effective sale of the bonds, the committee may authorize the Treasurer to sell any issue of bonds at less than their par value, notwithstanding Section 16754 of the Government Code. However, the discount on the bonds shall not exceed 3 percent of the par value thereof.

998.761. Out of the first moneys realized from the sale of bonds as provided herein, there shall be redeposited into the General Obligation Bond Expense Revolving Fund, established by Section 16724.5 of the Government Code, the amount of all expenditures made for the purposes specified in that section, and the moneys may be used for the same purpose and repaid in the same manner whenever additional bond sales are made. All moneys deposited in the fund that are derived from premium and accrued interest on bonds sold pursuant to this article shall be reserved in the fund and shall be available for transfer to the General Fund as a credit to expenditures for bond interest, except that amounts derived from premium may be reserved and used to pay costs of bond issuance prior to any transfer to the General Fund.

998.762. Any bonds issued and sold pursuant to this article may be refunded in accordance with Article 6 (commencing with Section 16780) of Chapter 4 of Part 3 of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code. The approval of the voters for the issuance of bonds pursuant to this article includes approval for the issuance of bonds issued to refund bonds originally issued under this article or any previously issued refunding bonds. Any bond refunded with the proceeds of refunding bonds as authorized by this section may be legally defeased to the extent permitted by law in the manner and to the extent set forth in the resolution, as amended from time to time, authorizing that refunded bond.

998.763. Notwithstanding any provision of the State General Obligation Bond Law or this article, if the Treasurer sells bonds pursuant to this article for which bond counsel has issued an opinion to the effect that the interest on the bonds is excludable from gross income for purposes of federal income tax purposes, subject to any conditions that may be designated, or otherwise entitled to any federal tax advantage, the Treasurer may maintain separate accounts for the investment of bond proceeds and for the earnings on those proceeds, and may use or direct those proceeds or earnings to pay any rebate, penalty, or other payment required by federal law or take any other action with respect to the investment and use of bond proceeds required or permitted pursuant to federal law necessary or desirable to maintain the tax-exempt status of the bonds or to obtain any other advantage pursuant to federal law on behalf of the funds of this state.

998.764. The proceeds from the sale of bonds authorized by this article are not "proceeds of taxes" as that term is used in Article XIII B of the California Constitution, and the disbursement of these proceeds is not subject to the limitations imposed by Article XIII B. "Declaration of Intent" proceeds of the bonds, in an amount not to exceed the principal amount of bonds authorized to be issued by this article (excluding any refunding bonds issued pursuant to Section 998.762), are expected to be and may be used to reimburse any lawfully available source used to pay costs of projects or programs (including funds of particular state departments or agencies that may be spent on costs of those projects or programs) authorized pursuant to this article and paid after November 3, 2026, provided, however, any costs that are to be reimbursed from proceeds of bonds shall not have been paid from the proceeds of any other indebtedness unless that prior indebtedness will be retired with the proceeds of the bonds.

SEC. 4. Sections 2 and 3 of this act shall become operative upon the adoption by the voters of the Veterans and Affordable Housing Bond Act of 2026.

SEC. 5. Sections 2 and 3 of this act shall be submitted to the voters as a single measure, the Veterans and Affordable Housing Bond Act of 2026, at the November 3, 2026, statewide general election, in accordance with provisions of the Government Code and the Elections Code governing the submission of a statewide measure to the voters.

SEC. 6. This act is an urgency statute necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety within the meaning of Article IV of the California Constitution and shall go into immediate effect. The facts constituting the necessity are:

In order to maximize the time available for the analysis and preparation of the proposed issuance of bonds pursuant to this act, it is necessary that this act take effect immediately.

**FILED**
in the office of the Secretary of State
of the State of California

JUN 25 2026

By ______________________
Deputy Secretary of State

Approved JUN 25, 2026

______________________
*Governor*

REPRESENTING CALIFORNIA'S RURAL COUNTIES

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| **To:** | Members of the RCRC Board of Directors |
| **From:** | Mary-Ann Warmerdam, Senior Vice President Governmental Affairs |
| **Date:** | August 11, 2026 |
| **Re:** | November 2026 Statewide Ballot Propositions Overview |

## Summary

This memo provides an overview of the November 2026 statewide ballot propositions that have qualified for the November ballot. Staff expects to bring forward several for RCRC Board of Directors consideration in August. The listing below is provided as an informational item and as an opportunity for Executive Committee members to ask questions and provide any initial feedback.

## Background

Currently, there are 14 statewide measures slated for the November 2026 General Election Ballot. Negotiations resulted in several high profile proposals being pulled or significantly changed.

## Issue

RCRC staff are reviewing each measure that has qualified for the November ballot to determine their impacts on rural counties. From that analysis, staff will identify which should be presented to the RCRC Board of Directors at the August Board of Directors meeting for consideration of a position.

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| ***Proposition 1: Affordable Housing Bond*** <br><br> This would allow the state to borrow a record $11.25 billion for affordable housing, with $10 billion to buy, build, rehabilitate and preserve affordable homes and $1.25 billion to help veterans buy homes. This measure was placed on the ballot by an act of the legislature. It is supported by the California Apartment Association and the Labor Fed. |
| ***Proposition 2: Rainy Day Fund*** <br><br> This constitutional amendment would allow the state to deposit up to 20% of its general fund tax revenue into its rainy day fund each year, instead of the current 10%. The state could also spend some tax revenue to pay down its $20 billion federal unemployment insurance debt. This measure was placed on the ballot by an act of the legislature. |

***Proposition 3: Make High-Earner Income Tax Permanent***

The measure seeks to make permanent a temporary income tax — up to 12% — on high earners that voters approved in 2012. The tax applies to household income over $721,000 for couples and over $360,000 for individuals. The tax generates between $5-15 billion each year for K-12 schools and community colleges. It is set to expire in 2031. This measure qualified via signatures and teachers unions are its main proponents.

***Proposition 4: Public Campaign Financing***

This measure would give California governments the authority to set up public financing systems for state and local political candidates. Public campaign financing has been banned in California since 1988. This measure was placed on the ballot by an act of the legislature.

***Proposition 5: Recall Election Reform***

After the recall of a statewide elected officer, this constitutional amendment would eliminate the election to pick a successor immediately, instead leaving the post vacant until it's filled in a separate election. It would also allow the recalled official to run for the office again. If the Governor is recalled, the Lieutenant Governor would fill the vacancy. If the Governor has not completed more than half of their term, a special election would be held at the time of the next regular statewide election. Vacancies for other statewide officials (Attorney General, Secretary of State, Controller etc.) would be filled by Gubernatorial appointment. This measure was placed on the ballot by an act of the legislature.

***Proposition 37: $25 billion homebuying loan***

This would create a $25 billion mortgage loan program for home buyers who make less than 200% of the area median income. The measure would offer fixed-rate mortgages for up to 17% of the purchase price on homes priced under $1.5 million. Home buyers must pay at least 3% of their down payment. This measure qualified via signature, and the effort was led by former California Senate Majority Leader Bob Hertzberg. It is supported by the California Association of Realtors and the Carpenters Union.

***Proposition 38: Immunology Research Bond***

This would allow the state to borrow $8.4 billion in debt to research immune system-based technologies for treating conditions including cancer, heart disease and Alzheimer's. The money would be divided between a University of California-affiliated nonprofit and a grant for public or nonprofit institutions. Any resulting technology and drugs from the research would be sold at 20% below the national average. This measure qualified via signature, and is supported by the ALS Association, the Alzheimer's Association, and Blood Cancer United.

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| ***Proposition 39: Voter ID***<br><br>This would require voters to present government-issued ID when voting in person or the last four digits of their ID number when voting by mail. This measure qualified via signature, and its main proponent is San Diego-area Assemblymember Carl DeMaio. |
| ***Proposition 40: Billionaire Tax***<br><br>This would apply a one-time 5% wealth tax on the assets of roughly 200 California billionaires, to be paid over five years. Ninety percent of the revenue would go to pay for healthcare for low-income Californians and 10% toward education and food assistance programs. This measure qualified via signature. It is supported by SEIU-UHW, AFSCME, and the Teamsters. It is opposed by Governor Newsom, Planned Parenthood, the California Medical Association, the California Teachers Association, the Cal Chamber, and others. |
| ***Proposition 41: Audit New Tax Spending***<br><br>This measure in response to the billionaire tax proposal would require state audits of programs funded by new taxes. It would also apply revenue from new taxes to the state's spending cap, which requires that spiking revenue go back to taxpayers or toward education. That would effectively cancel out the wealth tax proposal. If voters approve both measures, the one with more votes will prevail. This measure qualified via signature. |
| ***Proposition 42: Prohibits New Personal Property Taxes and Retroactive Taxes***<br><br>This measure would prevent new taxes on personal property and retroactive taxes, which would offset the wealth tax. If both pass, the one with more votes prevails. This measure qualified via signature. |
| ***Proposition 43: Higher Threshold for Local Special Taxes***<br><br>This measure would raise the threshold for citizen-driven special tax ballot initiatives to pass from a simple majority to two-thirds, making it harder to impose or increase taxes. The measure, placed on the ballot at the last minute by state lawmakers, reflects a deal state leaders struck with Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association. The measure that it replaced would've retroactively eliminated local taxes that had only received a simple majority vote. Despite voting for the legislative vehicle that placed it on the ballot, numerous Democratic legislative leaders have said that they aren't supporting the proposition itself. |
| ***Proposition 44: Health Clinic Funding***<br><br>This measure would require federally qualified health centers to spend 90% of revenue on direct patient care and services that aid in providing care to low-income and underserved people. Clinics that don't comply would be fined; the money would go into a state-operated account for worker training and staffing. Under the measure, telehealth and some administrators that work directly with Doctors and Nurses are not |

considered direct patient care. The measure qualified via signature, and the main proponent is SEIU-UHW. The measure is opposed by the California Primary Care Association, the California Medical Association, and Planned Parenthood.

***Proposition 45: CEQA Reform***

Proposition 45 significantly shortens and abbreviates local and state permitting processes, simplifies CEQA compliance, and reduces CEQA litigation risk for a wide variety of projects for which the developer agrees to use a skilled and trained workforce and enters into a project labor agreement. The measure requires all related and ancillary infrastructure and public service facilities to adhere to those specified labor standards. The measure also modifies existing tribal consultation requirements for those projects by expanding obligations and removing requirements to consult with non-federally recognized tribes. This measure qualified via signature, and is supported by the California Chamber of Commerce, the California Building Industry Association, investor-owned utilities, and others. It is opposed by the State Building Trades and some environmental organizations.

**Failed to Qualify**

Seven propositions that failed to qualify addressed a range of issues including:

- A more expansive version of what became Proposition 43, which would've also retroactively eliminated local tax measures that didn't meet the 2/3rds vote threshold, including those on the June and November ballot this year.
- Limit on hospital and other medical entities executive compensation, from the proponents of Prop 44.
- Limit on health care union political spending.
- Dueling tandem initiatives between trial attorneys and rideshare companies over auto accident liability.
- Repeal of law that doesn't allow statewide ballot propositions during primary or off year elections.
- AI child safety requirements.

Many of these potential propositions received enough signatures to qualify for the ballot but were voluntarily pulled following negotiations.

**Staff Recommendation**

Information only.

**To:** Members of the RCRC Board of Directors

**From:** Mary-Ann Warmerdam, Senior Vice President Governmental Affairs

**Date:** August 7, 2026

**Re:** State and Federal Legislative Update


**Summary**

A verbal state legislative update may be provided at the RCRC Board of Directors meeting, focused on the latest developments regarding the 2025-2026 Legislative Session. An update may also be provided on the latest developments at the federal level.


## Issue

### State Update

On Monday, August 3, the Legislature returned from summer recess to finish the 2025-2026 session.

Key deadlines in the coming month include:

- August 14th – the last day for appropriations committees to meet
- August 17th-31st – Floor Session (committee hearings are typically not permitted during this time, except in certain circumstances)
- August 31 – Final day to pass bills, last day of session.

During the final weeks of session, we expect significant amendments on Assembly Bill 690 (Schultz): Indigent Defense Contracting. RCRC, along with our county partners UCC and CSAC, opposed this bill earlier in the session and it has remained held in Appropriations. However, the author is hoping to move the legislation forward with significant amendments. An update on the status of this measure will be provided at the time of the RCRC Board of Directors meeting.

Other notable legislation to watch in the final weeks of session include:

- **Senate Bill 1135 (Blakespear)**, which would codify the state's program to compensate livestock producers for their conflict with gray wolves. RCRC has not taken a position on this measure, but has provided input and continues to remain engaged in the legislation. SB 1135 awaits action in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

- **Senate Bill 1305 (Richardson)**, which would require the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to study the viability of reintroducing grizzly bears into the Sierra Nevadas. This RCRC-opposed measure awaits action in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

- **Assembly Bill 1722 (Hadwick)**, which would harmonize California's take prohibition statutes to harmonize with federal law, protecting citizens from criminal charges if they use lethal force in self-defense against a protected species. The RCRC-supported AB 1722 awaits action on the Senate floor.

**State Budget**

On Monday, June 15, the Legislature passed the Budget Act of 2026 (Senate Bill 101). RCRC's June 15 breakdown of the *2026-27 State Budget Package* is available HERE.

Over the final days of June, the Legislature subsequently acted upon several budget trailer bills. While several issues were addressed by those actions in late June, several others—including Greenhouse Gas Reduction Funding (GGRF) remain unresolved and budget negotiations have been ongoing. RCRC compiled several key highlights of the latest budget actions that impact California's rural counties. To read RCRC's July 1 edition of the *State Budget Packet Highlights* see HERE.

At the time of this writing, the budget and trailer bills which the Legislature passed prior to summer recess have all been signed by the Governor.

**Federal Update**

**U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee Marks Up Farm Bill 2.0**

On August 6, the Senate Agriculture Committee marked up the *Agricultural Act of 2026*, but a motion to report the bill failed 10- 11. Rather than adjourn the meeting, Chairman John Boozman (R-AR) recessed the Committee, subject to the call of the Chair, preserving the option to hold another vote after the August recess.

The markup followed the Committee's July 31 release of revised legislative text, which included roughly 80 pages of changes to the June 24 draft. The July 31 text would permanently authorize nationwide, year-round sales of E15; restructure the Renewable Fuel Standard's small refinery exemption process; and delay, by one year, the SNAP benefit cost-sharing requirements enacted under the *One Big Beautiful Bill Act*. Specifically, States with SNAP payment error rates of 6 percent or higher would begin contributing to benefit costs in Fiscal Year 2029 rather than Fiscal Year 2028. The text would also require States with error rates of 10 percent or higher to contribute 20 percent of benefit costs beginning in Fiscal Year 2031, up from the 15 percent maximum under current law.

The proposed one-year SNAP delay remained the central point of disagreement between the parties throughout the markup, and ultimately led to a party-line vote that resulted in failure to report the bill out of committee. In an effort to secure the support of democrats, Chairman Boozman offered two additional nutrition concessions on August 5: allowing states to use either Fiscal Year 2026 or Fiscal Year 2027 payment error-rate data to calculate their Fiscal Year 2029 cost share and directing the resulting savings toward additional commodity purchases through the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). The provisions were adopted as part of the manager's en bloc amendment.

Neither the revised text, nor any amendment adopted during the markup, addressed Section 10106 of the *One Big Beautiful Bill Act*, which reduces the federal share of SNAP administrative costs from 50 percent to 25 percent beginning October 1, 2026. In California, and the nine other states where SNAP is administered by counties, counties will bear much of the additional cost. In January, eight state and local government organizations, including the National Governors Association and the National Association of Counties, urged Congress to delay the cost-sharing requirements until 2030.

Beyond SNAP, every amendment offered by Democrats either failed on a party-line vote, or was withdrawn. Several failed amendments addressed issues of importance to rural counties, including proposals to provide $4 billion for hazardous fuels reduction and watershed restoration; to restore $1.9 billion for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and $500 million for the Conservation Stewardship Program; to reinstate Rural Energy for America Program awards rescinded by USDA; and to provide rural hospitals with up to $8 million per facility, supported by $200 million annually over five years. The hospital funding amendment, offered by Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL), failed 11-12 along party lines.

For more information, contact RCRC Senior Vice President of Government Affairs, Mary-Ann Warmerdam.

### U.S. Senate Funding Bill Would Temporarily Narrow Hemp THC Ban

The Senate's stopgap funding bill (H.R. 6500), which would fund federal agencies through December 11, would also provide a temporary reprieve from the upcoming prohibition on most hemp-derived THC products. The ban was enacted late last year through the Agriculture appropriations bill that redefined hemp to close the "hemp loophole" created by the 2018 Farm Bill.

Rather than changing the effective date, Section 2019 would temporarily limit the prohibition to cannabinoids that cannot be produced naturally by a cannabis plant. As a result, the 0.4-milligram-per-container THC limit, which would effectively prohibit most consumable hemp products, would not apply until December 11, 2026. Synthetic cannabinoids would remain subject to the November 12 deadline.

The provision was added at the request of the White House, and the Administration has lobbied Senate Republicans to retain it. The White House described the provision as creating a four-week window to negotiate a federal regulatory framework while allowing the synthetic cannabinoid ban to take effect. The outreach appears to have persuaded some members, with Senator Rick Scott (R-FL) citing administration assurances that it would regulate the industry during that period.

Beyond hemp, this measure would also temporarily prevent the Administration from implementing its proposal to place political appointees in charge of approving federal grants and would prohibit new funding for Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement during the stopgap period.

The broader package continues to advance with strong bipartisan support. The Senate voted 89-4 on August 3, allowing the measure to clear its first procedural hurdle. On Friday, August 7, the Senate then voted to end debate and advance its version of the bill to a vote. If passed, this measure would return to the House of Representatives, which approved a more limited extension through December 4 without the hemp or grant provisions. The House would need to accept the changes made by the Senate, or negotiate a compromise, before Congress could enact a final package to avert an October 1 shutdown.

For more information, contact RCRC Senior Policy Advocate, Sarah Dukett.

### Senators Urge USDA to Reconsider Rural Development Reorganization

A group of twenty-two U.S. Senators led by Peter Welch (D-VT) and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) is urging USDA to reconsider its proposed reorganization of the Rural Development mission area. In a July 24th letter to Deputy Agriculture Secretary Stephen Vaden, the Senators warn that the plan could weaken essential services that support rural communities, businesses, and families.

The Senators emphasize that Rural Development provides grants and loans for small businesses; affordable housing; health care facilities; childcare centers; and infrastructure projects such as water, electricity, and broadband. They point out that recent staffing losses have already strained the Agency's ability to deliver these services, stating that money appropriated by Congress will not reach rural communities without adequate, expert staff.

The Senators indicate the Agency has lost approximately 36 percent of its workforce over the past year, and that the proposed reorganization would require many remaining employees to relocate, potentially prompting additional departures. The letter requests detailed information on staffing levels; hiring plans; employee training; recruitment efforts; and technology modernization. The Senators have requested a response by August 5, 2026.

For more information, contact RCRC Policy Advocate Eric Will.

### PACK Act of 2025 the Subject of a House Subcommittee Hearing

*The Packaging and Claims Knowledge (PACK) Act of 2025* (H.R. 6832), alongside several other consumer bills, was the subject of a July 22 hearing before the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade. Industry witnesses argued that a national standard for recyclability and compostability claims would replace a costly patchwork of state requirements, pointing to California's Senate Bill 54 and Senate Bill 343 as examples, while consumer advocates defended states' authority to set their own labeling standards and specifically opposed the *PACK*

*Act*, along with a related bill, the *Recycled Materials Attribution Act*, as preemption of stronger state protections. At the time of this writing, the *PACK Act* has 17 cosponsors and remains pending before the subcommittee, with no markup scheduled. Due to competing legislative priorities and congressional recess, significant movement is not expected before the adjournment of the 119th Congress.

RCRC has been circulating a coalition letter of opposition, tracking the movement of the bill, and continues to seek opportunities for engagement with committee members while awaiting any future markup of the bill.

For additional information, contact RCRC Senior Policy Advocate, John Kennedy.

**Introduction of Bipartisan, Bicameral Wildfire Reduction Market Expansion Act**

On July 22, the *Wildfire Reduction Market Expansion Act of 2026* (S. 5087/H.R.9827) was introduced in both the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives. This bicameral, bipartisan measure would expand the Renewable Fuel Standard's definition of "renewable biomass" under the *Clean Air Act* to include additional low-value woody material, such as slash, storm debris, pre-commercial thinning material, and fuel reduction and ecological restoration byproducts, sourced from qualifying private, tribal, and federal lands. It would also cover vegetation removed through defensible space and wildfire risk reduction projects in the wildland-urban interface and would establish a certification process for qualifying material.

Senators Jeff Merkley (D-OR) and Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS) introduced the Senate version, while Representatives Cliff Bentz (R-OR) and Bennie Thompson (D-MS) introduced the House companion. The legislation has more than a dozen cosponsors, including Senator Alex Padilla (D-CA) and Representative James Gallagher (R-CA), and is backed by more than 80 forestry, timber, and agriculture organizations, including the American Forest Resource Council and Associated Oregon Loggers.

The sponsors of the measure intend the expanded definition to create new market value for material that is otherwise costly to remove and dispose of, supporting hazardous fuels reduction, forest health, and rural forest economies.

For additional information, contact RCRC Senior Policy Advocate, Staci Heaton.

**Representative Kiley Introduces Biomass Facility Construction Act**

On July 17, Representative Kevin Kiley (I-CA) introduced the *Biomass Facility Construction Act* (H.R. 9746), which would create a tax credit equal to 30 percent of the cost of constructing a biomass facility, in addition to the existing production tax credit for energy generated from biomass. The bill is intended to address a shortage of biomass facility capacity that has made it difficult and costly for contractors to dispose of material removed during forest and wildfire mitigation work.

RCRC is currently assessing the measure.

For additional information, contact RCRC Senior Policy Advocate John Kennedy.

**U.S. Senators Urge Inclusion of Long-Term Disaster Recovery Funding in Supplemental Appropriations Package**

On July 20, 2026, U.S. Senators Adam Schiff (D-CA), Alex Padilla (D-CA), Thom Tillis (R-NC), and John Curtis (R-UT) sent a letter to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, urging inclusion of long-term disaster recovery funding in any forthcoming supplemental appropriations package. The letter follows an Administration emergency funding request that did not include long-term recovery resources.

The Senators are specifically requesting funding through the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program, citing recovery needs in California, North Carolina, and Utah. The letter also references the January 2025 Eaton and Palisades fires in Los Angeles County, which burned more than 40,000 acres and destroyed more than 16,000 structures, and notes damage to federal and state highways, public infrastructure, and housing.

For additional information, contact RCRC Senior Policy Advocate Staci Heaton.

**House Members Introduce Bill to Establish Federal Hemp Regulatory Framework**

On July 22, Representatives Andy Barr (R-KY) and Angie Craig (D-MN), ranking member of the House Agriculture Committee, introduced the *Lawful Hemp Protection Act*. The measure would create a federal regulatory framework for the hemp industry, setting national standards for cultivation, manufacturing, testing, and labeling, and prohibiting synthetic ingredients in finished hemp products.

The legislation would establish separate regulatory categories for industrial hemp and consumable hemp products; raise the legal hemp threshold to 1 percent total THC on a dry-weight basis; and direct the Food and Drug Administration to set cannabinoid limits for hemp-derived products. It would also require consumable hemp products to be grown, processed, and packaged domestically; limit sales to consumers 21 and older; impose packaging and marketing restrictions intended to reduce youth access; and create a federal regulatory system for hemp-derived beverages.

This measure has been introduced but has not yet been acted upon by the House Agriculture Committee.

For additional information, contact RCRC Senior Policy Advocate Sarah Dukett.

**Rural Development Modernization Act (H.R. 7609) Co-Sponsorship Efforts Continue**

RCRC is continuing efforts to increase support for and co-sponsorship of the *Rural Development Modernization Act* (H.R. 7609). The measure was introduced earlier this year by Representative Jim Costa (D-Fresno) with bipartisan cosponsors Representatives David Valadao (R-Hanford), Rick Crawford (R-AR), and Josh Riley (D-NY). The bill aims to harmonize USDA Rural Development eligibility thresholds at 25,000 across the agency's major programs, including water, wastewater, community facilities, broadband, and telemedicine. It would also direct USDA to reassess those thresholds on a regular basis so that eligibility keeps pace with census data, addressing a long-standing problem in which outdated population cutoffs have left many rural communities locked out of programs designed to serve them.

Meanwhile, groundwork is being laid for a Senate companion. Senator Schiff (D-CA) has agreed to lead on the Democrat side, and efforts are underway to identify a Republican co-lead in order that the Senate measure can be introduced with bipartisan support.

For more information, contact RCRC Senior Vice President of Government Affairs, Mary-Ann Warmerdam.

**NACo Encourages Counties to Request OMB Release Fiscal Analysis of New Proposal**

The Federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has proposed rewriting 2 CFR Part 200, the Uniform Guidance and the section governing federal grants counties receives. NACo encouraged counties to submit a comment to OMB before the Monday, July 13th comment deadline, asking OMB to publish a fiscal impact analysis on states and localities before finalizing the rule, and to delay implementation until at least Oct. 1, 2027, so counties have time to prepare.

RCRC joined with CSAC and other stakeholders on a letter to OMB outlining concerns that the proposed rule would undermine funding certainty; subject core county programs to arbitrary considerations; and create significant new administrative and fiscal burdens. Among the provisions of the proposed rulemaking are expanded authority for grants to be terminated mid-program; pre-award and pre-payment requirements; and more monitoring obligations for pass-through entities and subrecipients. In August 2026, the Senate voted on a Continuing Resolution (CR) that would delay the proposed changes until at least December 11, 2026, which will now require a vote from the House to adopt. If passed, the CR would only delay the regulations at this time, not remove the changes or close the docket.

For additional information, contact RCRC Policy Advocate, Eric Will.

**DOI Announces $733 Million in 2026 PILT Funding**

On June 23, the U.S. Department of the Interior announced that more than 1,900 state and local governments will receive a combined $733 million through the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program for 2026.

The Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program provides vital funding for rural counties in California and throughout the county. These annual payments are provided to jurisdictions containing tax-exempt federal land to offset the loss of property tax revenue those lands would otherwise generate. Payments cover lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, among others. Amounts are calculated based on the acreage of federal land within each jurisdiction and its population; local governments may use the funds for services such as fire protection, law enforcement, education, and road construction.

California's rural counties are set to receive nearly $56 million of the nearly $80 million dollars being distributed in California. See the list of PILT funding by State HERE. To view the funding for California counties, see HERE. More information about the Payment in Lieu of Taxes program is available on the U.S. Department of the Interior website.

For more information, or to learn about RCRC's advocacy for Payments in Lieu of Taxes, contact RCRC Senior Policy Advocate, Staci Heaton.

**U.S. Senators Introduce Bipartisan Measure to Expand Water Infrastructure Funding for Wildfire Suppression**

On June 17, Senators Alex Padilla (D-CA) and John Curtis (R-UT) introduced the *FIRE SMART Act*. This bipartisan legislation would expand funding eligibility for water infrastructure projects with wildfire suppression benefits in high-risk rural areas. The measure would amend the EPA's Drinking Water State Revolving Funds to allow projects that serve both drinking water and fire suppression purposes in wildfire-prone communities with fewer than 50,000 residents. The legislation is intended to help rural communities optimize water systems to provide the flow capacity needed for emergency response during active wildfires.

Eight senators have signed on to co-sponsor the measure, including Mark Kelly (D-AZ), Tim Sheehy (R-MT), Adam Schiff (D-CA), and Jeff Merkley (D-OR).

For additional information, contact RCRC Senior Policy Advocate Staci Heaton.

**EPA Announces $25.5 Million for Wastewater Technical Assistance in Rural, Small, and Tribal Communities**

On June 17, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced the availability of $25.5 million in grant funding for technical assistance providers that help small, rural, and Tribal communities address wastewater infrastructure challenges and comply with the Clean Water Act. The funding supports the agency's Real Water Technical Assistance (RealWaterTA) initiative and flows through the Rural, Small, and Tribal Clean Water Technical Assistance Grant Program, established by America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018.

EPA is accepting applications from technical assistance providers until August 14, 2026.

Funding may be used to assess community needs, support water quality compliance, train operators on infrastructure and management practices, and help communities navigate the federal funding application process. The assistance targets small wastewater systems, both centralized and decentralized, that face aging infrastructure, workforce shortages, rising costs, and declining rate bases. The program has awarded more than $102 million to date.

To learn more about the program or how to apply, see HERE.

For more information, contact RCRC Policy Advocate Eric Will.

**Senate Agriculture Committee Advances USDA Rural Development Nominee**

On June 8, the Senate Agriculture Committee voted 12 to 11 along party lines to advance the nomination of Glen Smith to serve as the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Undersecretary for Rural Development. The nomination now moves to the full Senate for a confirmation vote. Smith's nomination had stalled in committee, with several prior votes to advance him, postponed.

If confirmed, Smith would oversee USDA Rural Development's portfolio, which distributes billions of dollars annually for rural utilities, small businesses, broadband, and housing programs. He would replace Todd Lindsey, who has served as Acting Undersecretary since September 2025.

Smith previously chaired the Farm Credit Administration during the first Trump Administration, where he oversaw agricultural borrowing and lending institutions.

For more information, contact Mary-Ann Warmerdam, RCRC Senior Vice President, Government Affairs.

**James Gallagher Sworn In to Represent California's First Congressional District**

On June 10, James Gallagher (R-CA) was sworn in as the U.S. Representative for California's First Congressional District. Speaker Mike Johnson administered the oath of office following Gallagher's victory in the June 2 special election to fill the seat left vacant in January after the passing of Representative Doug LaMalfa (R-CA). Gallagher won 62.4 percent of the vote, securing the seat outright and avoiding a runoff.

Representative Gallagher, formerly the Republican leader in the California State Assembly, resigned his California Assembly seat the day before taking the oath. He will serve the remainder of LaMalfa's term through the end of the year. In remarks on the House floor, Representative Gallagher said he intends to continue LaMalfa's work representing the rural North State. The First District encompasses much of rural Northern California, including numerous RCRC member counties. Gallagher plans to seek a full two-year term in the November general election, where he will face Democratic State Senator Mike McGuire.

For additional information, contact Mary-Ann Warmerdam, RCRC Senior Vice President, Government Affairs.

**<u>Staff Recommendation</u>**
Information only. RCRC staff continues to work on state and federal policy items that impact California's rural counties.

**AB 28** **(Schiavo D) Solid waste landfills: subsurface temperatures.**
**Last Amend:** 6/11/2026
**Status:** 8/4/2026-From committee: That the measure be returned to Senate Floor for consideration. (Ayes 5. Noes 1.) (August 3)
**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 Amended | John (1) | Solid Waste 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:** 6/11/2026
**Status:** 7/16/2026-Approved by the Governor. Chaptered by Secretary of State - Chapter 89, Statutes of 2026.
**Summary:** The Administrative Procedure Act sets forth the requirements for the adoption, publication, review, and implementation of regulations by state agencies. The Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024 (act), 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. Existing 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. Existing 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, among other things, to develop draft project solicitation and evaluation guidelines, to transmit copies of those guidelines to the fiscal committees and to the appropriate policy committees of the Legislature, to hold a noticed public meeting on those guidelines, and to submit those guidelines to the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency, except as provided.

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

**AB 387** **(Alanis R) Nevaeh Youth Sports Safety Act.**
**Last Amend:** 8/3/2026
**Status:** 8/3/2026-Read second time and amended. Ordered to third reading.
**Summary:** The Nevaeh Youth Sports Safety Act requires a youth sports organization to ensure, by January 1, 2028, that its athletes have access to an automated external defibrillator (AED) during any official practice or match. Existing law requires a youth sports organization, commencing January 1, 2028, to ensure that its AED is maintained and tested according to specified operation and maintenance guidelines. This bill would require, commencing January 1, 2028, a public or private local facility with a permanent sports infrastructure, as defined, to ensure that the youth sports organization has access to an AED procured and maintained by the facility during an official practice or match permitted by the facility, except as specified with respect to local educational agencies. The bill would require the youth sports organization, commencing January 1, 2028, to ensure there is access to an operational AED if an AED is not available at a public or private local facility where an official practice or match is taking place. The bill would additionally require a public or private local facility, commencing January 1, 2028, to ensure that its AED is maintained and tested according to specified operation and maintenance guidelines.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Oppose | Sarah (1) | County Operations |

**AB 441** **(Hadwick R) Wildfire prevention: wildfire mitigation program.**

**Last Amend:** 6/10/2026

**Status:** 6/29/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.

**Summary:** Existing law, upon appropriation of the Legislature, requires the Office of Emergency Services to enter into a joint powers agreement with the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to develop and administer a comprehensive wildfire mitigation program. Existing law requires the department to delegate its duties and responsibilities for this program to the Office of the State Fire Marshal. Existing law requires the State Fire Marshal, in consultation with other officials, to identify measures eligible for financial assistance under the wildfire mitigation program that are both cost effective and provide for appropriate site or structure fire risk reduction, as specified. Existing law requires the joint powers authority to develop eligibility criteria for property owners, community organizations, and local governments who may receive financial assistance under the wildfire mitigation program. Existing law requires the joint powers authority to submit a report to the Legislature regarding the implementation of the wildfire mitigation financial assistance program that includes, among other things, an evaluation of the cost-effectiveness of the wildfire mitigation program compared to other structure hardening, defensible space, vegetation management, and fuel reduction incentive programs. Existing law repeals these provisions on July 1, 2029. This bill would extend the repeal date of the above provisions to January 1, 2030.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Staci (1) | Forest & Public Lands Stewardship |

**AB 442** **(Hadwick R) Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act of 1973: working forest management plans: nonindustrial timber management plans.**

**Last Amend:** 6/1/2026

**Status:** 7/2/2026-Read third time. Passed. Ordered to the Assembly. (Ayes 37. Noes 0.). In Assembly. Concurrence in Senate amendments pending.

**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. This bill would increase the maximum acreage for nonindustrial tree farmers and nonindustrial management plans to 4,000 acres and for working forest landowners and working forest management plans to 15,000 acres.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Staci (1) | Forest & Public Lands Stewardship |

**AB 690** **(Schultz D) Criminal procedure: indigent defense compensation.**

**Last Amend:** 5/23/2025

**Status:** 8/29/2025-In committee: Held under submission. (Set for hearing on 08/13/2026)

**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 706** **(Aguiar-Curry D) Forest Organic Residue, Energy, and Safety Transformation (FOREST) and Wildfire Prevention Fund Act.**
**Last Amend:** 7/2/2026
**Status:** 8/3/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law establishes in the Natural Resources Agency the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL-FIRE) and makes CAL-FIRE responsible for, among other things, fire protection and prevention, as provided. Existing law establishes the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection in CAL-FIRE to represent the state's interest in the acquisition and management of state forests and requires the board to maintain an adequate forest policy. Former Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr., issued a proclamation of a state of emergency on October 30, 2015, that required CAL-FIRE, the Natural Resources Agency, the Department of Transportation, and the State Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission (Energy Commission), among other things, to identify areas of the state that represent high hazard zones for wildfire and falling trees, known as Tier 1 and Tier 2 high hazard zones. This bill would, upon appropriation by the Legislature, make moneys from the Timber Regulation and Forest Restoration Fund or from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund available to the state board to establish the Forest Organic Residue Energy and Safety Transformation (FOREST) program in order to maintain and expand biomass power generation in the state, to revitalize idle facilities for biomass power generation, and to support biomass power generation facilities by creating additional capacity for power generation or feedstock utilization in strategically located regions of the state. The bill would make a facility's solid fuel biomass electrical generation eligible for reimbursement at an incentive rate determined by the state board if, among other things, the facility uses solid fuel biomass or forest biomass waste, as defined, to generate electricity and the electricity is sold to specified retail sellers. The bill would require, among other things, that no less than 60% of the feedstock used by a facility originate from Tier 1 and Tier 2 high hazard zones, as defined.

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

**AB 762** **(Irwin D) Disposable, battery-embedded vapor inhalation device: prohibition and penalties.**
**Last Amend:** 6/30/2026
**Status:** 8/3/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law regulates the manufacture, sale, and disposal of various single-use products, including single-use foodware accessories and condiments and single-use carryout bags. Existing law prohibits a store from, among other things, providing, distributing, or selling a carryout bag at the point of sale, except as specified. This bill 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 contains a tobacco product, as defined, but not cannabis or a cannabis product, as defined, and that is not designed or intended to be reused, as specified.

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

**AB 956** **(Quirk-Silva D) Accessory dwelling units and junior accessory dwelling units.**
**Last Amend:** 6/15/2026
**Status:** 8/4/2026-Read second time. Ordered to third reading.
**Summary:** Existing law provides for the creation of junior accessory dwelling units by local ordinance, or, if a local agency has not adopted an ordinance, by ministerial approval, in single-family residential zones in accordance with specified standards and conditions. Existing law, the Davis-Stirling Common Interest Development Act, governs the management and operation of common interest developments. Existing law defines "common interest development" for purposes of the act to include, among other things, a planned development and a condominium project. Existing law makes void and unenforceable any covenant, restriction, or condition contained in any instrument affecting the transfer or sale of any interest in a planned development, and any provision of a governing document, that effectively prohibits or unreasonably restricts the construction or use of an accessory dwelling unit or junior accessory dwelling unit on a lot zoned for single-family residential use that meets the above-described standards and conditions for those units. This bill would expand the provision that makes void and unenforceable any covenant, restriction, or condition contained in any instrument affecting the transfer or sale of any interest in a planned development to include any covenant, restriction, or condition contained in an instrument affecting the transfer or sale of any interest in a common interest development. The bill would revise the provision governing prohibitions or restrictions on the construction or use of an accessory dwelling unit or junior accessory dwelling unit on a lot zoned for single-family residential use to instead apply to the construction or use of an accessory dwelling unit or junior accessory dwelling unit on a lot zoned to allow single-family residential use.

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

**AB 1198** **(Haney D) Public works: prevailing wages.**
**Last Amend:** 1/22/2026
**Status:** 6/22/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**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, 2027, 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, 2027. 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. The bill would require the director to, upon notice to the interested parties, initiate an investigation or hold a hearing, and, within 20 days after the filing of that petition, except as specified, make a final determination and transmit the determination in writing to the awarding body and to the interested parties.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Oppose | Sarah (1) | County Operations |

**AB 1294** **(Haney D) Real property tax: welfare exemption: moderate-income housing.**
**Last Amend:** 6/15/2026
**Status:** 8/10/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing property tax law, pursuant to constitutional authorization, provides for a “welfare exemption” for property used exclusively for religious, hospital, scientific, or charitable purposes and that is owned or operated by certain types of nonprofit entities, if certain qualifying criteria are met. That law provides a partial welfare exemption in the case of residential rental property used for lower income households, as specified, calculated as that percentage of the value of the property that is equal to the percentage that the number of units serving lower income households represents of the total number of residential units. This bill would, for lien dates commencing on or after January 1, 2027, and before January 1, 2030, provide a partial welfare exemption in the case of certain residential rental property used for low- and moderate-income households. The partial exemption would be equal to the value of the units serving low- and moderate-income households, as defined. The bill would require an owner to make specified certifications relating to the use of the property. The bill would apply the exemption described above for a period of 15 years from the date of the initial filing of the exemption, as specified.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Oppose Unless Amended | Sarah (1), Tracy (2) | Community & Economic Development, County Operations |

**AB 1439** **(Garcia D) Public retirement systems: development projects: labor standards.**
**Last Amend:** 6/11/2026
**Status:** 6/22/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** The California Constitution grants the retirement board of a public employee retirement system plenary authority and fiduciary responsibility for investment of moneys and administration of the retirement fund and system. These provisions qualify this grant of powers by reserving to the Legislature the authority to prohibit investments if it is in the public interest and the prohibition satisfies standards of fiduciary care and loyalty required of a retirement board. Existing law prohibits the boards of the Public Employees’ Retirement System (PERS) and the State Teachers’ Retirement System (STRS) from making certain new investments or renewing existing investments of public employee retirement funds, including in a thermal coal company, as defined. Existing law provides that a board is not required to take any action regarding those investments unless the board determines in good faith that the action is consistent with the board’s fiduciary responsibilities established in the California Constitution. This bill would request the University of California, Berkeley, Labor Center to conduct an independent study to analyze the extent of labor standards protections

in California real estate and infrastructure development projects funded through the real asset portfolios of PERS and STRS.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Oppose | Sarah (1) | County Operations |

**AB 1457** **(Bryan D)** **General plan: environmental justice element: disadvantaged communities.**
**Last Amend:** 6/4/2026
**Status:** 8/4/2026-Read second time. Ordered to third reading.
**Summary:** The Planning and Zoning Law requires each planning agency to prepare and the legislative body of each county and city to adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development of the county or city, and specified land outside its boundaries, that contains specified mandatory elements, including an environmental justice element, or related goals, policies, and objectives integrated in other elements, that identifies disadvantaged communities, as defined, within the area covered by the general plan of the city, county, or city and county, if the city, county, or city and county has a disadvantaged community, as specified. The law requires a city, county, or city and county subject to these provisions to adopt or review the environmental justice element, or the environmental justice goals, policies, and objectives in other elements, upon the adoption of the next revision of two or more elements concurrently on or after January 1, 2018. This bill would require a city, county, or city and county to meaningfully involve disadvantaged communities in the development, adoption, and implementation of the environmental justice element, or the related goals, policies, and objectives integrated in other elements, using methods that are designed to effectively involve disadvantaged communities based on local conditions and circumstances, as specified.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Oppose Unless Amended | Staci (1), Tracy (2) | Public Safety & Emergency Management |

**AB 1564** **(Ahrens D)** **Employer-employee relations: confidential communications.**
**Last Amend:** 5/18/2026
**Status:** 8/3/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing 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 existing law further prohibit denying to employee organizations the rights guaranteed to them by existing 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 1576** **(Ortega D)** **Workers' compensation: Subsequent injuries payments.**
**Last Amend:** 4/20/2026
**Status:** 6/29/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law provides certain methods for determining workers' compensation benefits payable to a worker or the worker's dependents for purposes of permanent total disability or permanent partial disability that include a determination of the percentage of permanent disability incurred. Existing law requires that, for injuries incurred before January 1, 2013, in determining the percentages of permanent disability, account be taken of the nature of the physical injury or disfigurement, the occupation of the injured employee, and the injured employee's age at the time of the injury, and requires that specified factors be considered in determining an employee's diminished earning capacity for these purposes. For purposes of these provisions, "nature of the physical injury or disfigurement" incorporates the descriptions and measurements of physical impairment and the corresponding percentages of impairments published in the American Medical Association (AMA) Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment (5th Edition). For injuries occurring on or after January 1, 2013, in determining the percentages of permanent disability, existing law requires the same factors be taken into account but removes from consideration the employee's diminished future earning capacity and, instead, incorporates an adjustment factor of 1.4, as specified. Existing law also establishes the Subsequent Injuries Benefits Trust Fund, a continuously appropriated fund. Under existing law, if a permanently, partially disabled employee receives a subsequent compensable injury resulting in additional permanent disability, then that employee receives compensation from the Subsequent Injuries Benefits Trust Fund. Existing law requires, when applicable, the additional permanent

disability resulting from the subsequent injury to be equal to 35% or more of total, when considered alone and without regard to, or adjustment for, the occupation or the age of the employee. For purposes of determining permanent disability resulting from a subsequent injury, this bill would measure permanent disability, for injuries occurring on or after January 1, 2005, and prior to January 1, 2013, by the whole person impairment rating as determined in accordance with the AMA Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment (5th Edition), after adjustment for diminished future earning capacity and without regard to, or adjustment for, the occupation or age of the employee.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Oppose | Sarah (1) | County Operations |

**AB 1617** **(Alanis R)** **Household hazardous waste: reporting.**
**Last Amend:** 7/2/2026
**Status:** 8/3/2026-Read second time. Ordered to third reading.
**Summary:** Existing regulations require each public agency that is responsible for household hazardous waste management to complete and submit a "Form 303 Household Hazardous Waste Collection Report" (Form 303) electronically to the Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery each year. Existing regulations require the reporting timeframe to be July 1 of the previous fiscal year through June 30 of that fiscal year, with the information required to be submitted to the state by October 1 of the following fiscal year. Existing law requires a public agency, or its contractor, operating a household hazardous waste collection facility to, on or before October 1 of each year, submit a copy of the completed Form 303 to the officer or agency authorized to implement and enforce specified hazardous materials laws. Existing law requires that the completed Form 303 also be submitted to the Department of Toxic Substances Control until specified regulations adopted by the Secretary for Environmental Protection are effective and other conditions are met. This bill would require that Form 303 to instead report information for the prior calendar year.

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

**AB 1621** **(Wilson D)** **Planning and Zoning Law: postentitlement phase permits: Housing Accountability Act.**
**Last Amend:** 6/3/2026
**Status:** 8/3/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** The Planning and Zoning Law requires a local agency or state agency to compile one or more lists that specify in detail the information required from any applicant for a postentitlement phase permit, as defined. Existing law also establishes time limits for completing reviews regarding whether an application for a postentitlement phase permit is complete and compliant, and whether to approve or deny an application. Existing law requires the time limits to be tolled, if the local agency or state agency requires review of the application by an outside entity, until the outside entity completes the review and returns the application, as specified. This bill would prohibit a local agency or state agency from requiring or requesting more than 2 plan check and specification reviews in connection with an application for a building permit, as part of its review. The bill would authorize a local agency or state agency to deny an application that is not compliant with the permit standards following 2 plan check and specification reviews. The bill would also authorize an applicant to request additional submittals of applications that are not compliant with the permit standards. The bill, if a local agency or state agency finds that a complete application is noncompliant, would prohibit a local agency or state agency from requesting or requiring any action or inaction as a result of a building inspection undertaken to assess compliance with the applicable building permit standards that would represent a deviation from a previously approved building plan or similar approval for the building permit, except as specified.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Oppose Unless Amended | Tracy (1) | Community & Economic Development |

**AB 1642** **(Harabedian D)** **Wildfires: contamination standards.**
**Last Amend:** 7/2/2026
**Status:** 8/3/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law establishes the Office of the State Fire Marshal in the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and establishes the Deputy Director of Community Wildfire Preparedness and Mitigation within the office. Existing law makes the deputy director responsible for fire preparedness and mitigation missions of the department, as provided. The Department of Toxic Substances Control regulates the handling and management of hazardous waste and hazardous materials. This bill would establish a nonrebuttable presumption that a home, school, workplace, or other structure is safe for human occupancy after a wildfire only if the level of lead on an indoor surface meets specified conditions, as provided. The bill would require the Department of Toxic Substances Control to adopt, no later than July 1, 2027, emergency regulations specifying the science-informed, health-based standards for investigation, environmental testing, and clearance, to guide the removal of lead and asbestos inside and outside of homes, schools, workplaces, and

other structures in residential areas after a wildfire, as provided.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | John (2), Staci (1) | Public Safety & Emergency Management, Solid Waste Management, Water & Wildlife |

**AB 1660** (**Schiavo** D) **Public guardians and public administrators.**
**Last Amend:** 8/4/2026
**Status:** 8/5/2026-Read second time. Ordered to third reading.
**Summary:** Existing law requires a public guardian to apply for appointment as a guardian or conservator of the person, the estate, or the person and estate if there is an imminent threat to a person's health or safety or the person's estate, there is no one else who is qualified and willing to act, as specified, the appointment would be in the best interests of the person, and the person is domiciled in the county. Existing law similarly requires a court to order a public guardian of a county to apply for appointment as a guardian or conservator if it appears that there is no one else who is qualified and willing to act. Existing law grants a public guardian a variety of powers, including the right to take control of real or personal property, issue written certification of this fact, and restrain a person from transferring, encumbering, or disposing of real or personal property held in a trust. A written certification issued by a public guardian and public conservator for these purposes is valid for 30 days after its issuance. Existing law requires a financial institution or other person, without inquiring into the truth of the written certification and without court order or letters being issued, to provide the public guardian or public conservator with specified information, including, among other things, property held in the sole name of the proposed ward or conservatee, and to take specified actions. Existing law establishes the public administrator as an officer of a county. Existing law regulates the administration of estates of decedents and permits the public administrator to be appointed to administer these estates under certain circumstances. Under existing law, a written certification issued by a public administrator for these purposes is valid for 30 days after its issuance. Existing law requires a financial institution, governmental or private agency, retirement fund administrator, insurance company, licensed securities dealer, or other person, without inquiring into the truth of the written certification, without requiring a death certificate, without charge, and without court order or letters being issued, to perform specified functions, including providing the public administrator complete information concerning property held in the sole name of the decedent, including names and addresses of beneficiaries or joint owners, and granting the public administrator access to a safe-deposit box rented in the sole name of the decedent, as specified. This bill would remove the requirement that the property be held, or the safe-deposit box be rented, in the sole name of the decedent.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Sarah (1) | County Operations, Health Care & Social Services |

**AB 1699** (**Rogers** D) **Good Fire Act: Prescribed Fire Liability Pilot Program: burn bosses: California Environmental Quality Act.**
**Last Amend:** 6/25/2026
**Status:** 8/3/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law establishes, until January 1, 2028, the Prescribed Fire Liability Pilot Program, to be administered by the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, to increase the pace and scale of the use of prescribed fire and cultural burning and to reduce barriers for conducting prescribed fires and cultural burning. Existing law creates the Prescribed Fire Claims Fund in the State Treasury to support coverage for losses from prescribed fires and cultural burning by nonpublic entities, such as cultural fire practitioners, private landowners, and nongovernmental entities. Under existing law, moneys in the fund are under the control of the department, and the department or a contracted third-party administrator is authorized to direct payments for claims from the fund, consistent with specified guidelines adopted by the department. These guidelines include, among other things, (1) a requirement that an eligible claim relate to either a prescribed fire conducted or supervised by a burn boss, as defined, or a cultural burn conducted or supervised by a cultural fire practitioner, and (2) a requirement that a claim shall not be paid from the fund unless the department reviewed and approved a burn plan before the prescribed fire or cultural burning. Existing law requires, upon order of the Department of Finance, the $20,000,000 appropriated to the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection by the Legislature in the Budget Act of 2021 be transferred into the fund, and provides that all moneys deposited or transferred into the fund be continuously appropriated to the department for these purposes. By Executive Order N-35-25, Governor Gavin Newsom suspended the limitation on public and governmental agencies enrolling in the Prescribed Fire Liability Pilot Program to the extent that the limitation would prohibit resource conservation districts and volunteer fire departments or districts from such enrollment. This bill would establish the Good Fire Act, which would indefinitely extend the Prescribed Fire Liability Program. The bill would explicitly state that the Prescribed Fire Claims Fund shall support coverage for losses from prescribed fires and cultural burning on any lands within the state.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Staci (1) | Forest & Public Lands Stewardship |

**AB 1711** **(Connolly D)** **Fairs: funding.**
**Last Amend:** 4/8/2026
**Status:** 8/3/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law appropriates certain unallocated moneys and other specified moneys deposited into the Fair and Exposition Fund, a continuously appropriated fund, to the Secretary of Food and Agriculture for capital outlay to California fairs for, among other things, fair projects involving public health and safety, fair projects involving major and deferred maintenance, and fair projects necessary due to any emergency, as specified. This bill would instead appropriate those moneys described above to the secretary for capital outlay to California fairs for fair projects involving public health, fire and life safety, and emergency services improvement projects at fairs, California Code of Regulations compliance projects, and maintenance projects at fairgrounds, as specified. By expanding the purposes for which those moneys may be used, the bill would make an appropriation.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Eric (1) | Agriculture |

**AB 1722** **(Hadwick R)** **California Endangered Species Act: take prohibition: self-defense.**
**Last Amend:** 6/25/2026
**Status:** 8/4/2026-Read second time. Ordered to third reading.
**Summary:** The California Endangered Species Act requires the Fish and Game Commission to establish a list of endangered species and a list of threatened species and to add or remove species from either list if it finds, upon the receipt of sufficient scientific information, as specified, that the action is warranted. The act prohibits the taking of an endangered or threatened species, except under certain circumstances. The violation of the act is a crime. This bill would prohibit the imposition of a civil, administrative, or criminal penalty for a violation of the take prohibition if the defendant used necessary and reasonable force to protect themselves, a member of their family, or any other individual from immediate bodily harm from a species listed pursuant to the act. The bill would require a person who committed a take, or an attempted take, of a species listed pursuant to the act under these circumstances to notify the Department of Fish and Wildlife within 24 hours after the take.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Staci (1) | Water & Wildlife |

**AB 1751** **(Quirk-Silva D)** **Missing Middle Townhome Ownership Act.**
**Last Amend:** 8/4/2026
**Status:** 8/10/2026-From committee: Be ordered to second reading pursuant to Senate Rule 28.8.
**Summary:** The Planning and Zoning Law contains various provisions requiring a local government that receives an application for certain types of qualified housing developments to review the application under a streamlined, ministerial approval process, depending on the type of housing development, as specified. Existing law, the Subdivision Map Act, vests the authority to regulate and control the design and improvement of subdivisions in the legislative body of a local agency and sets forth procedures governing the local agency's processing, approval, conditional approval or disapproval, and filing of tentative, final, and parcel maps, and the modification thereof. The act generally requires a subdivider to file a tentative map or vesting tentative map with the local agency, as specified, and the local agency, in turn, to approve, conditionally approve, or disapprove the map within a specified time period. Existing law, known as the Starter Home Revitalization Act of 2021, among other things, requires a local agency to ministerially consider, without discretionary review or a hearing, a parcel map or a tentative and final map for a housing development project that meets certain requirements, including that the housing development project on the lot proposed to be subdivided will contain 10 or fewer residential units, except as provided. This bill, the Missing Middle Townhome Ownership Act, would authorize a development proponent to submit an application for a townhome development project that is subject to a prescribed ministerial approval process if the development complies with certain procedural requirements and satisfies specified objective planning standards. The bill would also require a local agency to ministerially consider, without discretionary review or a hearing, a tentative and final map for a townhome development project that meets specified requirements, including that the proposed subdivision complies with the requirements established by the bill for ministerial approval of a townhome development project, as described in the preceding sentence, and that the newly created parcels are no smaller than 600 square feet.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
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| Oppose | John (2), Tracy (1) | Community & Economic Development |

**AB 1777** **(Garcia D) Air pollution: indirect sources.**
**Status:** 5/18/2026-Read second time. Ordered to third reading.
**Summary:** Current law designates the State Air Resources Board as the state agency with the primary responsibility for the control of vehicular air pollution, and air pollution control districts and air quality management districts with the primary responsibility for the control of air pollution from all sources other than vehicular sources. Current law authorizes air districts to adopt and implement regulations to reduce or mitigate emissions from indirect sources of air pollution. Current law requires the state board to adopt rules and regulations relating to vehicular emissions standards, as specified, that will achieve the ambient air quality standards required by federal law in conjunction with other measures adopted by the state board, air districts, and the United States Environmental Protection Agency. This bill would authorize the state board, if necessary to carry out that duty to achieve those ambient air quality standards, to adopt regulations to reduce or mitigate emissions from indirect sources of pollution.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Oppose | Staci (1) | Air Quality |

**AB 1811** **(Rogers D) Health professionals.**
**Last Amend:** 6/22/2026
**Status:** 8/6/2026-From Consent Calendar. Ordered to third reading.
**Summary:** Existing federal law requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to designate health professional shortage areas and requires the secretary, in establishing criteria for the designation of those areas, to consider, among other things, the ratio of available health manpower to the number of individuals in an area or population group and indicators of a need for health services, as specified. Existing state law makes references to federally recognized or designated health professional shortage areas in various contexts, including, among others, the California Physician Corps Program, the California Reproductive Health Services Corps, the Oral Health Program, the Virtual Health Hub for Rural Communities Pilot Program, and health professions planning grants. This bill, until January 1, 2035, would define the term “health professional shortage area” to mean (1) an area determined by the Department of Health Care Access and Information to have a shortage of health professionals, (2) a health professional shortage area designated or recognized by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, or (3) an area designated or recognized as a health professional shortage area by the United States Department of Health and Human Services on January 1, 2025, regardless of whether that area remains designated or recognized by the United States Department of Health and Human Services as a health professional shortage area.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
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| Sponsor | Sarah (1) | Health Care & Social Services |

**AB 1812** **(Aguiar-Curry D) Solid waste: compostable products.**
**Last Amend:** 7/2/2026
**Status:** 8/3/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law prohibits a person from selling or offering for sale a product, as defined, that is labeled with the term “compostable” or “home compostable” unless, among others, the product meets a specified ASTM standard specification, has OK compost HOME certification, and meets a standard adopted by the Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery. Existing law requires the department to review revisions to the ASTM standard specification, as provided. Existing law authorizes the department to adopt a standard different from an ASTM standard if adopted or developed by a standard-setting organization recognized by the department, the standard adds qualifications to an ASTM standard specification, and the standard is more stringent than an ASTM standard specification, as provided. Existing law exempts a fiber product that is demonstrated to not incorporate any plastics or polymers from complying with any of these ASTM standards. This bill would instead prohibit a person from selling or offering for sale a product that is labeled with the term “compostable” or “home compostable” unless the product has OK compost HOME certification or meets a standard adopted by the department. The bill would repeal the requirement for the department to review revisions to the ASTM standard specification.

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

**AB 1820** **(Schiavo D) Electric vehicle charging stations: permit fees.**
**Last Amend:** 7/2/2026
**Status:** 8/4/2026-Read second time. Ordered to third reading.
**Summary:** Existing law requires a city, county, or city and county to administratively approve an application to install an electric vehicle charging station through the issuance of a building permit or similar nondiscretionary permit, and requires every local government to adopt an ordinance that creates an expedited, streamlined permitting process for

electric vehicle charging stations, as provided. Existing law defines "electric vehicle charging station" to mean any level of electric vehicle supply equipment station that is designed and built in compliance with specified provisions, and delivers electricity from a source outside an electric vehicle into a plug-in electric vehicle. Existing law requires fees charged by a local agency for specified purposes, including permits, to not exceed the estimated reasonable cost of providing the service for which the fee is charged, unless a question regarding the amount of the fee charged in excess of this cost is submitted to, and approved by, 2/3 of the electors. Existing law, until January 1, 2034, prohibits a city, county, city or county, or charter city from charging a permit fee for a solar energy system that exceeds the estimated reasonable cost of providing the service for which the fee is charged, which cannot exceed $450 plus $15 per kilowatt for each kilowatt above 15kW for residential solar energy systems, and $1,000 plus $7 per kilowatt for each kilowatt between 51kW and 250kW, plus $5 for every kilowatt above 250kW, for commercial solar energy systems, unless the city, county, city and county, or charter city provides substantial evidence of the reasonable cost to issue the permit as part of a written finding and an adopted resolution or ordinance, as provided. This bill, until January 1, 2036, would prohibit a city, county, city or county, or charter city from charging a permit fee for an electric vehicle charging station that exceeds the estimated reasonable cost of providing the service for which the fee is charged, which cannot exceed $500 plus $5 per kilowatt for each kilowatt between 51kW and 250kW, plus $2 for every kilowatt above 250kW, for a level 2 electric vehicle charging station installed at a new or existing multifamily housing development, unless the city, county, city and county, or charter city provides substantial evidence of the reasonable cost to issue the permit as part of a written finding and an adopted resolution or ordinance, as provided.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Oppose | John (2), Tracy (1) | Community & Economic Development |

**AB 1821** **(Pacheco D)** **California Public Records Act: agency response time.**
**Last Amend:** 6/25/2026
**Status:** 8/4/2026-Read second time. Ordered to third reading.
**Summary:** The California Public Records Act requires each state or local agency, upon a request for a copy of records that reasonably describes an identifiable record or records, to make the records promptly available to any person upon payment of fees covering direct costs of duplication, or a statutory fee if applicable, except with respect to public records exempt from disclosure by express provisions of law. Existing law requires each agency, within 10 days of a request for a copy of records, to determine whether the request seeks copies of disclosable public records in possession of the agency and to promptly notify the person of the determination and the reasons therefor. Existing law authorizes that time limit to be extended by no more than 14 days under unusual circumstances, as defined. This bill would instead require each agency to determine whether the request seeks copies of disclosable public records in possession of the agency and to promptly notify the person as described above within 10 business days of a request for a copy of records.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Sarah (1) | County Operations |

**AB 1859** **(Ortega D)** **Public works.**
**Last Amend:** 5/18/2026
**Status:** 8/3/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law requires that, except as specified, not less than the general prevailing rate of per diem wages be paid to workers employed on public works. Existing law defines "public works," for the purposes of regulating public works contracts as, among other things, construction, alteration, demolition, installation, or repair work done under contract and paid for, in whole or in part, out of public funds. Existing law makes any officer, agent, or representative of the state or of any political subdivision who willfully violates specified provisions, including providing notice of certain public works projects, as specified, to the Department of Industrial Relations, guilty of a misdemeanor. Existing law requires the Labor Commissioner to investigate allegations that a contractor or subcontractor violated the law regulating public works projects, including the payment of prevailing wages. Existing law requires each contractor and subcontractor on a public works project to keep accurate payroll records, showing the name, address, social security number, work classification, straight time and overtime hours worked each day and week, and the actual per diem wages paid to each journeyman, apprentice, worker, or other employee employed by the contractor or subcontractor in connection with the public work. This bill would require an awarding body or owner to give reasonable access, as defined, to representatives of a joint-labor management committee in order to monitor compliance with the prevailing wage and apprenticeship requirements. The bill would authorize an awarding body, owner, contractor, or subcontractor to deny or revoke access to the committee's representative if the representative fails or refuses to comply with job site safety requirements, as specified. The bill would authorize the committee to bring an action against an awarding body, contractor, or subcontractor that willfully denies the committee's representative reasonable access.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Oppose Unless | Eric (2), Sarah (1) | County |

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| | Amended | | Operations |

**AB 1883** (**Bryan** D) **Workplace surveillance tools.**
**Last Amend:** 7/2/2026
**Status:** 8/3/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** Would, with certain exceptions, prohibit an employer from using a workplace surveillance tool that uses artificial intelligence to, among other things, collect neural data or recognize an individual's emotional state. The bill would define an employer to include a governmental entity, including, among other entities, charter cities and the University of California. This bill would require the Labor Commissioner to enforce the bill's provisions, would authorize an employee to bring a civil action for specified remedies for a violation of the bill's provisions, and would authorize a public prosecutor to enforce the provisions. The bill would subject an employer who violates the bill's provisions to a civil penalty of up to $500 for each violation. The bill would define various terms for purposes of its provisions. This bill would exempt from its provisions the use of a tool to the extent that its use is to ensure safety or is reasonably necessary to comply with, a federal statute, federal regulation, or binding federal contract relating to the development of aircraft for use in the national airspace or the development of products or services for national security, military, space, or defense purposes. The bill would include findings that changes proposed by this bill address a matter of statewide concern rather than a municipal affair and, therefore, apply to all cities, including charter cities.

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

**AB 1914** (**Schiavo** D) **General plan elements: childcare.**
**Last Amend:** 6/8/2026
**Status:** 8/3/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** The Planning and Zoning Law requires the legislative body of a city or county to adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan that includes various elements, including, among others, a land use, circulation, housing, safety, and environmental justice element. Existing law requires a city or county to update its general plan elements subject to certain criteria and timelines. This bill would require a city, county, or city and county, no later than January 1, 2033, to prepare and adopt a childcare plan or integrate a childcare plan into the next adoption of the city, county, or city and county's general plan to address the childcare needs of the jurisdiction, as specified.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
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| Removal of Opposition | Tracy (1) | Community & Economic Development |

**AB 1923** (**Soria** D) **Local ballot measures: County of Fresno.**
**Last Amend:** 8/3/2026
**Status:** 8/6/2026-Approved by the Governor. Chaptered by Secretary of State - Chapter 108, Statutes of 2026.
**Summary:** The electors of a county may propose an ordinance to the county board of supervisors by submitting an initiative petition containing signatures by registered voters in the county in an amount equal to 10% of the number of votes cast within the county for all candidates for Governor at the preceding gubernatorial election. If the county elections official certifies that an initiative petition has been signed by at least that number of voters, the county board of supervisors is required to either adopt the ordinance or submit it to the voters at the next statewide election occurring not less than 88 days later. This bill would require any Fresno County initiative petition that has been certified as sufficient by the Fresno County Registrar of Voters on or before July 8, 2026, to be submitted, without alteration, to the voters at the November 3, 2026, statewide general election.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Sarah (1) | Health Care & Social Services |

**AB 1934** (**Bennett** D) **State Fire Marshal: home hardening certification program implementation plan.**
**Last Amend:** 6/9/2026
**Status:** 8/3/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law requires the Office of the State Fire Marshal to develop and make available on its internet website a Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Safety Building Standards Compliance training intended for use in the training of local building officials, builders, and fire service personnel, as specified. Existing law authorizes the Office of the State Fire Marshal to allow certification of contractors who conduct defensible space, home hardening, fuel reduction, roadside clearance, and other contracting activities for wildlife resiliency efforts and who have completed specified training programs. Existing law requires the Office of the State Fire Marshal to develop and update a Wildland-Urban Interface Products listing of products and construction assemblies that comply with prescribed regulations regarding

building in a wildland-urban interface area. Existing law authorizes the Office of the State Fire Marshal to expend funds from the Building Standards Administration Special Revolving Fund, upon an appropriation by the Legislature, for the purposes of researching and developing the products listing and the educational and training provisions. Existing law requires the Office of the State Fire Marshal to establish the State Fire Marshal's Wildfire Mitigation Advisory Committee. This bill would require, on or before January 1, 2028, the State Fire Marshal's Wildfire Mitigation Advisory Committee to develop an implementation plan for a home hardening certification program that identifies home hardening measures, including defensible space, that can be voluntarily implemented during renovation or property improvement projects, or both, to substantially reduce the risk of loss during a fire and bring existing building stock into alignment with state building standards for wildland-urban interface areas. The bill would require the committee, in developing the implementation plan for the home hardening certification program, to provide specified recommendations. The bill would authorize the Office of the State Fire Marshal to expend funds from the Building Standards Administration Special Revolving Fund, upon an appropriation by the Legislature, for the purposes of developing the implementation plan for the home hardening certification program.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Staci (1) | Public Safety & Emergency Management |

**AB 1961** **(Ahrens D)** **Civil actions: protective orders: workplace violence.**
**Last Amend:** 6/18/2026
**Status:** 6/29/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law authorizes an employer or collective bargaining representative of an employee who has suffered harassment, unlawful violence, or a credible threat of violence from any individual, to seek a workplace violence restraining order on behalf of the employee and, at the discretion of the court, any number of other employees at the workplace or at other workplaces of the employer. Existing law authorizes one or more representative parties to bring suit for the benefit of a class of parties if the question is one of a common or general interest, of many persons, or when the parties are numerous, and it is impracticable to bring them all before the court. This bill would authorize an employer to seek a workplace violence restraining order on behalf of all employees at the employer's workplace or a location at which a group of employees perform their primary job duties if harassment, unlawful violence or a credible threat of violence is directed at that workplace or location.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Sarah (1) | County Operations |

**AB 1997** **(Lee D)** **Land use: housing development approvals: timelines and processes.**
**Last Amend:** 6/18/2026
**Status:** 8/4/2026-Read second time. Ordered to third reading.
**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. The Permit Streamlining Act sets forth various procedures for the review and approval of development project applications. Among other things, the act requires a public agency that is the lead agency or a responsible agency for a development project to approve or disapprove the project within a specified period of time, which varies depending on the project's phase in the CEQA process. The act defines "development project" to include specified housing development projects, as provided. This bill would additionally require approval or disapproval of a housing development project within 30 days from the date of certification by the lead agency of the environmental impact report (EIR), if the EIR is prepared pursuant to specified provisions of CEQA if certain other conditions are met. The bill would also define "housing development project" for the purposes of the Permit Streamlining Act and make additional conforming changes. By imposing additional duties on local agencies, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Removal of Opposition | Tracy (1) | Community & Economic Development |

**AB 2002** **(Solache D)** **Local government assistance: Regional Early Action Planning Fund.**
**Last Amend:** 6/18/2026
**Status:** 6/29/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** The Planning and Zoning Law requires each county and each city to adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development of the county or city, and specified land outside its boundaries, that includes, among other specified mandatory elements, a housing element. That law requires the Department of Housing and

Community Development, in consultation with each council of governments, to determine the existing and projected need for housing in each region and further requires the appropriate council of governments, or the department for cities and counties without a council of governments, to adopt a final regional housing need plan that allocates a share of the regional housing need to each city, county, or city and county, as provided. Existing law establishes the Local Government Planning Support Grants Program, administered by the department, for the purpose of providing regions and jurisdictions with one-time funding, including grants for planning activities to enable jurisdictions to meet the sixth cycle of the regional housing need assessment, as provided. This bill would establish the Regional Early Action Planning Fund in the State Treasury for the purpose of providing councils of governments, regional entities, and jurisdictions with one-time funding, including grants for planning activities, to enable those entities to meet the 7th and subsequent cycles of the regional housing need assessment. The bill would require the department to allocate funds, upon appropriation by the Legislature, from the Regional Early Action Planning Fund to each council of governments or regional entity responsible for allocating regional housing need that applies and qualifies for those moneys, as specified. The bill would authorize a council of governments or regional entity to expend funds awarded for certain purposes, including for activities that support the development, improvement, or implementation of the methodology for the 7th and subsequent regional housing needs assessment cycles, and for providing jurisdictions with technical assistance, planning, temporary staffing, or consultant needs associated with updating local planning and zoning documents, as provided.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Tracy (1) | Community & Economic Development |

**AB 2011** (**Hart** D) **Nonquantitative treatment limitations.**
**Last Amend:** 6/15/2026
**Status:** 6/22/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing federal law, the federal Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 (MHPAEA), requires group health plans and health insurance issuers that provide both medical and surgical benefits and mental health or substance use disorder benefits to ensure that financial requirements and treatment limitations applicable to mental health or substance use disorder benefits are no more restrictive than the predominant requirements or limitations applied to substantially all medical and surgical benefits. Existing state law requires every health care service plan and disability insurance policy issued, amended, or renewed on or after January 1, 2021, that provides hospital, medical, or surgical coverage to provide coverage for medically necessary treatment of mental health and substance use disorders under the same terms and conditions applied to other medical conditions, as specified. This bill would prohibit a health care service plan or insurer from relying upon discriminatory factors or evidentiary standards to design a nonquantitative treatment limitation (NQTL) to be imposed on mental health or substance use disorder benefits, as specified. To ensure that an NQTL applicable to mental health or substance use disorder benefits in a classification is no more restrictive than the predominant NQTL applied to substantially all medical/surgical benefits in the classification, the bill would require a health care service plan or insurer to collect and evaluate relevant data to assess the impact of the NQTL on outcomes related to access to mental health and substance use disorder benefits and medical/surgical benefits. The bill would require specified health care service plans or insurers to perform and document comparative analyses of the design and application of each NQTL applicable to mental health or substance use disorder benefits in accordance with prescribed requirements and submit the analyses to the respective departments upon request. If the departments make a final determination of noncompliance, the bill would require the health care service plan or insurer to, among other things, notify all enrollees or insureds of its noncompliance with the requirements of parity.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Sarah (1) | Health Care & Social Services |

**AB 2038** (**Harabedian** D) **Residential property insurance: cancellations and nonrenewals.**
**Last Amend:** 3/16/2026
**Status:** 6/29/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law generally regulates classes of insurance, including residential property insurance. Existing law requires an insurer, in the case of a total loss to the primary insured structure under a policy of residential property insurance, for at least the next two annual renewal periods, but no less than 24 months of coverage from the date of the loss, to renew the policy under certain circumstances, including that the total loss to the primary insured structure was caused by a disaster. Existing law prohibits an insurer from canceling or refusing to renew a policy of residential property insurance for a property located in a ZIP Code within or adjacent to a fire perimeter for one year after the declaration of a state of emergency, if the cancellation or nonrenewal is based solely on the fact that the insured structure is located in an area in which a wildfire has occurred. This bill would instead require an insurer to renew the policy of residential property insurance, under the above-described circumstances, for at least the next three annual renewal periods, but no less than 36 months of coverage from the date of the loss.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
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| Support | Staci (1) | Public Safety & Emergency Management |

**AB 2101** (**Gipson** D) **Human trafficking: notice and training: disaster sites.**
**Last Amend:** 5/18/2026
**Status:** 8/3/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law requires specified businesses and other establishments, including, among others, airports, intercity passenger rail or light rail stations, bus stations, and truck stops, to post a notice, as developed by the Department of Justice, that contains information relating to slavery and human trafficking, including information regarding specified nonprofit organizations that a person can call for services or support in the elimination of slavery and human trafficking. This bill would additionally require a privately operated entity that operates in a designated disaster site or designated mitigation site, as those terms are defined, that is involved in the response, recovery, rebuilding, or cleanup of a disaster site, permitting related to recovery, rebuilding, or cleanup of a disaster site, or efforts to mitigate or prevent the occurrence of a disaster, to post the above-described notice, except for telecommunications companies or internet service providers.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Removal of Opposition | Sarah (2), Tracy (1) | Community & Economic Development, County Operations |

**AB 2180** (**Ward** D) **Local government: Proposition 218 Omnibus Implementation Act: proportional cost of service.**
**Last Amend:** 5/22/2026
**Status:** 6/11/2026-Read second time. Ordered to third reading.
**Summary:** The California Constitution specifies various requirements with respect to the levying of assessments and property-related fees and charges by a local agency. As part of those requirements, the California Constitution mandates that such fees or charges that are extended, imposed, or increased satisfy certain requirements, including, but not limited to, that the amount of the fee or charge imposed upon any parcel or person as an incident of property ownership not exceed the proportional cost of the service attributable to the parcel. Existing law, known as the Proposition 218 Omnibus Implementation Act (act), prescribes specific procedures and parameters for local jurisdictions to comply with these requirements and, among other things, authorizes an agency providing water, wastewater, sewer, or refuse collection services to adopt a schedule of fees or charges authorizing automatic adjustments that pass through increases in wholesale charges for water, sewage treatment, or wastewater treatment or adjustments for inflation under certain circumstances. This bill would authorize a local government to demonstrate the proportional cost of the service attributable to the parcel by any method that reasonably allocates the ascertainable cost of providing service to all parcels, if substantiated as provided. The bill would, however, provide that for water or sewer service fee or charge impositions, a local government is not required to provide an exact measure of the cost of the service at each parcel and may instead impose uniform or tiered rates to parcel or customer classes that are defined based on common characteristics indicative of likely water or sewer use.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Eric (1), Sarah (1) | County Operations, Water & Wildlife |

**AB 2201** (**Boerner** D) **Medi-Cal: eligibility redetermination.**
**Last Amend:** 7/2/2026
**Status:** 8/3/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing federal law, enacted on July 4, 2025, sets forth various changes to Medicaid eligibility with regard to community engagement reporting, redeterminations, retroactive coverage, and cost sharing, among other factors, for certain Medicaid populations. Existing law, for purposes of acquiring information necessary to conduct eligibility redeterminations, requires a county to gather information available to the county that is relevant to the beneficiary's Medi-Cal eligibility before contacting the beneficiary. This bill would require the county, in the case of an annual or 6-month redetermination, to verify countable income and assets at renewal without requesting additional verification information or documentation if any of specified sets of conditions are met, relating to certain financial data sources. This bill would require that these provisions be implemented subject to an appropriation made by the Legislature. By creating new duties for counties relating to Medi-Cal eligibility determinations or redeterminations, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Sarah (1) | Health Care & Social Services |

**AB 2218** **(Kalra D) Water policy: California Native American tribes.**
**Last Amend:** 7/2/2026
**Status:** 8/3/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** Would require the state government to support California Native Americans to maintain cultural and linguistic traditions, practice ecosystem stewardship, and engage in good faith government-to-government consultations with all California Native American tribes regarding policies that may affect tribal communities.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Oppose | Eric (1) | County Operations, Water & Wildlife |

**AB 2254** **(Addis D) Coastal resources: monarch butterfly habitat.**
**Last Amend:** 7/2/2026
**Status:** 8/3/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law establishes the Department of Fish and Wildlife and sets forth the duties of that department, which include administering various programs for the protection and conservation of fish and wildlife. Existing law authorizes the department to take feasible actions to conserve monarch butterflies and the unique habitats they depend upon for successful migration. Existing law, the California Coastal Act of 1976, among other things, establishes the California Coastal Commission and provides for planning and regulation of development in the coastal zone, as defined. This bill would require, on or before July 1, 2028, the department, in coordination with the commission, to identify known monarch butterfly overwintering habitat sites in the coastal zone and current local government monarch butterfly overwintering habitat management plans or policies. The bill would also require, on or before July 1, 2029, the department, in coordination with the commission, to develop and provide guidance on model policies to be used by a local government for the protection of monarch butterfly overwintering habitat, including habitat restoration and enhancement.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Oppose Unless Amended | Staci (1) | Water & Wildlife |

**AB 2301** **(Soria D) Community colleges: Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing Pilot Program.**
**Status:** 8/3/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** Would require the office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges to develop a Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing Pilot Program that authorizes select community college districts to offer a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree. The bill would limit the pilot program to 10 community college districts statewide and would require the chancellor's office to identify and select eligible community college districts based on specified criteria. The bill would require the chancellor's office to develop a process designed to assist community college districts with nursing programs that are applying for national accreditation for the purpose of qualifying for the pilot program, as provided. The bill would require each participating community college district to give priority registration for enrollment in the pilot program to students with an associate degree in nursing from that community college district. The bill would require the Legislative Analyst's Office to conduct an evaluation of the pilot program to determine the effectiveness of the program and the need to continue or expand the program, as specified, to be submitted to the Legislature on or before July 1, 2034. The bill would repeal these provisions as of January 1, 2036.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Sarah (1) | Health Care & Social Services |

**AB 2310** **(Carrillo D) Illegal dumping.**
**Last Amend:** 6/25/2026
**Status:** 8/3/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law makes it unlawful to dump waste matter in certain locations, such as upon a public or private highway or road, upon private property without the consent of the owner, or in or upon a public park or other public property, as specified. Existing law also makes it unlawful to place, deposit, or dump rocks, concrete, asphalt, or dirt in certain locations, as specified. A person violating these provisions is guilty of an infraction, as specified. Existing law makes a violation of these provisions in commercial quantities, as defined, a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment in a county jail and by a fine, as specified. Under existing law, a private owner is not restricted in the use of their own private property, unless the placing, depositing, or dumping of the waste matter on the property creates a public health and safety hazard, a public nuisance, or a fire hazard, as determined by a local health or fire department or the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. This bill would make it a crime to transport waste matter, rocks, concrete, asphalt, dirt, or other construction debris for the purpose of placing, depositing, or dumping it in the locations described above. The bill would increase the maximum fine to $5000 for violating these provisions a 4th or subsequent time. The

bill would also make it unlawful to transport for the purpose of placing, depositing, or dumping waste matter, rocks, concrete, asphalt, dirt or other construction debris in commercial quantities, as defined, in the locations described above. The bill would specify that the fact that a person is operating a vehicle with actual or apparent rocks, concrete, asphalt, dirt, or other construction debris in their vehicle does not in itself constitute reasonable suspicion to stop or detain the person, or probable cause to arrest the person. For a person who violates these provisions in commercial quantities in excess of 25 cubic yards, the bill would make that violation a misdemeanor punishable in a county jail for not more than one year and by a fine, as specified. For commercial quantities in excess of 50 cubic yards, the bill would make a violation punishable as a misdemeanor or a felony, as specified. By expanding the application of a crime and creating new crimes, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

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

**AB 2410** **(Ellis R) Wildfire safety: fuels reduction projects: California Environmental Quality Act.**
**Last Amend:** 7/9/2026
**Status:** 8/3/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**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. CEQA exempts from its requirements certain projects. This bill would, until January 1, 2030, exempt from CEQA critical fuels reduction projects that address extremely flammable species, are conducted in communities located in high fire threat districts or very high fire hazard severity zones, and remove specified nonnative species or common species. The bill would require projects exempt from CEQA pursuant to this exemption to comply with the best management practices under the 2025 Statewide Fuels Reduction Environmental Protection Plan, as provided. The bill would require a lead agency carrying out a project exempt from CEQA pursuant to this exemption to consult with the Department of Fish and Wildlife, as provided, and to, within 90 days of project completion, submit a notice of project completion and a final compliance determination regarding the 2025 Statewide Fuels Reduction Environmental Protection Plan to the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency and the Secretary for Environmental Protection, as provided. The bill would require, on or before March 1, 2028, and annually thereafter, the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency to, in consultation with the Secretary for Environmental Protection, submit a report to the Legislature with specified information summarizing the implementation of these provisions during the preceding calendar year.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Staci (1) | Forest & Public Lands Stewardship |

**AB 2469** **(Papan D) Data centers: water use disclosures.**
**Last Amend:** 7/2/2026
**Status:** 8/10/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** The Planning and Zoning Law authorizes the legislative body of any county or city to adopt ordinances that, among other things, regulate the use of buildings, structures, and land as between industry, businesses, residences, and open space, as specified. This bill would prohibit a city, county, or city and county from approving a discretionary or ministerial permit or other entitlement that would result in the construction, or an expansion that increases the maximum peak water use, of a data center unless specified conditions are satisfied, including, among others, that the applicant provides the city, county, or city and a county prescribed information. The bill would include in this prescribed information a water scarcity plan, a water supply assessment, and a water use assessment, each as provided. The bill would also include in the specified conditions that the applicant assumes responsibility for the full cost of any required water conveyance, treatment or storage, or distribution infrastructure improvements necessary to serve the project, as determined by the Department of Water Resources or the applicable water supplier.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Oppose Unless Amended | Eric (1), John (2) | Water & Wildlife |

**AB 2494** **(Rogers D) State forests: forest management.**
**Last Amend:** 6/24/2026
**Status:** 8/3/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law authorizes the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to engage in management of state forests and defines “management” for purposes of the state forests as a means of handling forest crop and forest soil to achieve maximum sustained production of high-quality forest products while giving consideration to values relating to, among other values, recreation, watershed, and wildlife, as provided. This bill would redefine “management” for purposes of state forests as the handling of forest vegetation, water, and soils within the demonstration state forest

system for public benefits, as described.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
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| Oppose Unless Amended | Staci (1) | Forest & Public Lands Stewardship |

**AB 2545** **(Schiavo D)** **Report: labor force impact: artificial intelligence.**
**Last Amend:** 6/30/2026
**Status:** 8/3/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** Would establish the California Artificial Intelligence Worker Impact Data Assessment Project and would establish the California Artificial Intelligence Worker Impact Data Assessment Project Advisory Panel in the Employment Development Department (EDD). The bill would require the advisory panel to consist of 14 members, appointed as prescribed. The bill would require the EDD, in consultation with the advisory panel, to perform an assessment of data sources and collection methods regarding the use and impact of advanced artificial intelligence systems on the labor force, as specified. The bill would require the advisory panel to submit a report to the Legislature by January 1, 2028, with the results of the assessment and would require the report to provide policy recommendations to the Legislature, including, but not limited to, how to effectively support workers impacted by artificial intelligence. The bill would require the advisory panel to post the report on its internet website. The bill would require that the advisory panel be dissolved upon submission of the report to the Legislature and would repeal these provisions on January 1, 2029.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support If Amended | Sarah (1) | County Operations |

**AB 2588** **(Hadwick R)** **District agricultural associations: board of directors: vacancies.**
**Last Amend:** 6/3/2026
**Status:** 7/2/2026-From Consent Calendar. Ordered to inactive file at the request of Senator McGuire.
**Summary:** Existing law divides the state into agricultural districts, and provides for the management of these districts by district agricultural associations. Existing law requires the officers of the association to consist of a board of directors of 9 members, establishes a 4-year term of office for the directors, and requires the directors to be appointed by the Governor, as specified. This bill would, if the Governor has not filled a vacancy on the board of directors within 90 days and the board of directors has insufficient membership to establish a quorum, authorize the board of directors to temporarily appoint a director to fill the vacancy and to establish a quorum, as provided.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Eric (1) | Agriculture |

**AB 2605** **(Arambula D)** **State Public Defender: county public defenders: data collection.**
**Last Amend:** 7/2/2026
**Status:** 8/3/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** Under existing law, the board of supervisors of any county may establish the office of public defender for the county and authorize reciprocal or mutual assistance agreements with boards of supervisors of other counties authorizing their respective public defenders to enter into reciprocal or mutual assistance agreements, or authorize reciprocal or mutual assistance agreements with the State Public Defender, if the public defender of the county is unable to perform public defender duties because of, among other reasons, lack of personnel, lack of expertise, or lack of other resources by the local office. Existing law, subject to an appropriation by the Legislature, requires the State Public Defender, in consultation with the California Public Defenders Association and other subject matter experts, to undertake a study to assess appropriate workloads for public defenders and indigent defense attorneys and to submit a report with their findings and recommendations to the Legislature no later than January 1, 2024. This bill would require the board of supervisors of each county to specify a contact person with the applicable oversight and to collect specified information on public defense services provided in the county, and report that data to the Office of the State Public Defender every 2 years beginning on January 1, 2029. Because the bill would require local officials to perform additional duties, it would impose a state-mandated local program.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Removal of Opposition | Sarah (1) | Public Safety & Emergency Management |

**AB 2640** **(Hadwick R)** **Commission on State Mandates: state mandates.**
**Last Amend:** 6/18/2026

**Status:** 6/29/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing 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. Existing 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. Existing 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 |
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| Support | Sarah (1) | County Operations |

**AB 2656** **(Petrie-Norris D)** **Public employees: notice: artificial intelligence performing service within scope of work.**
**Last Amend:** 7/1/2026
**Status:** 8/3/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** Executive Order No. N-12-23 requires specified state agencies, in collaboration with other state agencies and their workforce, to draft a report to the Governor examining the most significant, potentially beneficial use cases for deployment of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools by the state. The executive order requires the report to explain the potential risks to individuals, communities, and government and state government workers, and requires the report to be regularly assessed and updated in consultation with, among others, the state government workforce or organizations that represent state government employees, as specified. Chapter 928 of the Statutes of 2024, the Generative Artificial Intelligence Accountability Act, requires specified state agencies to update the report, as needed, to respond to significant developments and to consult with specified parties, including organizations that represent state exclusive employee representatives. This bill would require certain state and local public employers to provide written notice to a recognized employee organization at least 45 days before taking an action to develop, purchase, or require the use of GenAI to perform a service that is within the scope of work of the job classification represented by the recognized employee organization.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Oppose Unless Amended | Sarah (1), Tracy (2) | County Operations |

**AB 2667** **(Hadwick R)** **Vape products: household hazardous waste: advertising.**
**Last Amend:** 6/25/2026
**Status:** 8/3/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law authorizes certain entities to operate household hazardous waste collection facilities, as defined, including permanent and temporary household hazardous waste collection facilities, under permits issued by the Department of Toxic Substances Control. Existing law requires hazardous waste transported to a household hazardous waste collection facility to be transported by specified entities, and imposes conditions on the acceptance of hazardous waste by a household hazardous waste collection facility, including, among others, that the hazardous waste not exceed certain weight requirements. A violation of the hazardous waste control laws is a crime. This bill would require, until January 1, 2030, the department to evaluate opportunities to increase safety and convenience related to the management and disposal of vape pens confiscated from students by a school, as provided, and identify any recommendations that require future legislative action. The bill would authorize a permanent household hazardous waste collection facility to mechanically disassemble vape pens and devices in a manner that does not result in the unauthorized release of hazardous materials, as specified.

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

**AB 2724** **(Bauer-Kahan D)** **Catastrophe modeling: distressed areas.**
**Last Amend:** 4/16/2026
**Status:** 8/3/2026-In committee: Referred to APPR. suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law establishes the California FAIR Plan Association, a joint reinsurance association in which all insurers licensed to write basic property insurance participate to administer a program for the equitable apportionment of basic property insurance for persons who are unable to obtain that coverage through normal channels. Existing regulations authorize insurers, in distressed areas and for properties insured by the FAIR Plan that are exposed to wildfire risk, to use catastrophe modeling, as specified. Under existing regulations, a distressed area includes undermarketed ZIP Codes and distressed counties. This bill, on or before July 1, 2027, and yearly thereafter, would require the Department of Insurance to review and update distressed areas. As part of the review and update, the bill would require the department, among other things, to hold at least one public meeting to allow interested persons to

submit suggestions for distressed areas, as specified.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Staci (1) | Public Safety & Emergency Management |

**AB 2728** **(Soria D) Groundwater: de minimis extractors: fees: exemption.**
**Last Amend:** 6/11/2026
**Status:** 8/10/2026-Read third time. Passed. Ordered to the Assembly. (Ayes 39. Noes 0.).
**Summary:** Existing law authorizes a groundwater sustainability agency to impose fees, including, but not limited to, permit fees and fees on groundwater extraction or other regulated activity, to fund the costs of a groundwater sustainability program, and investigations, inspections, compliance assistance, enforcement, and program administration, as provided. Existing law prohibits a groundwater sustainability agency from imposing those fees on a de minimis extractor, as defined, unless the agency has regulated the user, as provided. This bill would authorize a local government, including, but not limited to, a groundwater sustainability agency, that imposes a fee, levy, charge, or exaction for groundwater monitoring or management, upon making specified findings, to exempt de minimis extractors, including the above-described regulated users, from the payment of the fee, levy, charge, or exaction, as provided.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Eric (1) | Water & Wildlife |

**SB 28** **(Umberg D) Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment (CARE) court program.**
**Last Amend:** 7/2/2026
**Status:** 8/5/2026-August 5 set for first hearing. Placed on suspense file.
**Summary:** The Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment (CARE) Act authorizes specified persons, including a person with whom the respondent resides, family members, and first responders, among others, to petition a civil court to create a voluntary CARE agreement or a court-ordered CARE plan and implement services, to be provided by county behavioral health agencies, to provide behavioral health care, including stabilization medication, housing, and other enumerated services, to adults who are currently experiencing a severe mental illness and have a diagnosis identified in the disorder class schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders, and who meet other specified criteria. The Lanterman-Petris-Short Act authorizes a conservator of the person, of the estate, or of the person and the estate to be appointed for a person who is gravely disabled as a result of a mental health disorder or impairment by chronic alcoholism. Existing law requires the officer providing the conservatorship investigation, which may include a public guardian or a county mental health program, to investigate all available alternatives to conservatorship and to recommend conservatorship to the court only if no suitable alternatives are available. Existing law requires a conservatorship under these provisions to terminate after one year and specifies procedures if the conservator determines conservatorship is still required. This bill would authorize a conservator to, upon the termination of a conservatorship, request the court refer the conservatee to CARE court, as specified.

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

**SB 222** **(Wiener D) Residential heat pump water heater or heat pump HVAC systems.**
**Last Amend:** 6/15/2026
**Status:** 8/5/2026-August 5 set for first hearing. Placed on suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law establishes the State Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission and prescribes the authorities, duties, and responsibilities of the commission pertaining to energy matters. Existing law requires the 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. Existing 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. This bill would establish various requirements and authorizations for the installation of a residential heat pump water heater or heat pump HVAC system, as defined, by, among other things, requiring a city, county, or city and county, beginning July 1, 2027, to adopt and offer asynchronous inspections for installations that do not require a licensed contractor and building inspector to be simultaneously present during the inspection. The bill would additionally require a city, county, or city and county, except as specified, to post specific information online, and on or before July 1, 2028, to implement an online automated permitting process for the installation of a residential heat pump water heater or residential heat pump HVAC system that issues permits in real time to a licensed contractor that meets certain criteria.

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

**SB 239** (**Arreguín** D) **Crimes: criminal threats.**
**Last Amend:** 7/2/2026
**Status:** 8/5/2026-August 5 set for first hearing. Placed on suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law makes it a crime to willfully threaten to commit a crime that will result in death or great bodily injury to another person, as specified. Under existing law, this crime is punishable as a misdemeanor or by imprisonment in state prison as a felony. Existing law, for the purposes of sentencing for a felony violation of these provisions, authorizes the court to consider, as a factor in aggravation, that the defendant willfully threatened to commit a crime that would result in the death or great bodily injury of a state constitutional officer, a Member of the Legislature, or a judge or court commissioner, as specified. This bill would additionally authorize the court to consider, as a factor in aggravation, that the defendant willfully threatened to commit a crime that would result in the death or great bodily injury of an elections official of a city, county, city and county, or public district, or an elected local agency official, as specified.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Sarah (1) | County Operations |

**SB 299** (**Cabaldon** D) **California Environmental Quality Act: exemption: day care center: zoning.**
**Last Amend:** 6/29/2026
**Status:** 8/6/2026-Read second time. Ordered to third reading.
**Summary:** The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires a lead agency, as defined, to prepare, or cause to be prepared, and certify the completion of an environmental impact report on a project that it proposes to carry out or approve that may have a significant effect on the environment or to adopt a negative declaration if it finds that the project will not have that effect. CEQA also 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. Existing 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, as defined, that is located on a parcel of land zoned exclusively for residential use, except as provided.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Sponsor | John (1) | CEQA |

**SB 331** (**Menjivar** D) **Health care coverage: hearing aids.**
**Last Amend:** 6/1/2026
**Status:** 8/6/2026-Read second time. Ordered to third reading.
**Summary:** Existing law requires an individual or small group health care service plan contract or health insurance policy to include, at a minimum, coverage for essential health benefits, as specified. Commencing January 1, 2027, if the United States Department of Health and Human Services approves a new essential health benefits benchmark plan for the state, existing law requires essential health benefits to include an annual hearing exam and one hearing aid per ear every three years. This bill, the Let California Kids Hear Act, would require a large group health care service plan contract or health insurance policy issued, amended, or renewed on or after January 1, 2027, to include coverage for hearing aids, as defined, for enrollees and insureds under 21 years of age, if medically necessary. The bill would limit the maximum required coverage amount to $3,000 per individual hearing aid, as specified. Because a willful violation of these requirements by a health care service plan would be a crime, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Oppose | Sarah (1) | Health Care & Social Services |

**SB 501** (**Allen** D) **Responsible Battery Recycling Act of 2022: covered batteries.**
**Last Amend:** 6/1/2026
**Status:** 8/5/2026-August 5 set for first hearing. Placed on suspense file.
**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. Existing 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. Existing law excludes from the definition of a covered battery a primary battery weighing over 2 kilograms. Existing 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. Existing law also excludes from the definition of a covered battery a rechargeable battery weighing over 5 kilograms and having a watthour rating of more than 300 watthours. 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.

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

**SB 601** **(Allen D)** **Water: waste discharge.**
**Last Amend:** 7/10/2025
**Status:** 8/29/2025-August 29 hearing postponed by committee. (Set for hearing on 08/13/2026)
**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 615** **(Allen D)** **Vehicle traction batteries.**
**Last Amend:** 7/1/2026
**Status:** 7/1/2026-Read third time and amended. Ordered to third reading.
**Summary:** Existing law requires the Secretary for Environmental Protection to convene the Lithium-Ion Car Battery Recycling Advisory Group to review, and advise the Legislature on, policies pertaining to the recovery and recycling of lithium-ion vehicle batteries sold with motor vehicles in the state. Existing law also requires the advisory group to submit policy recommendations to the Legislature aimed at ensuring that as close to 100% as possible of lithium-ion vehicle batteries in the state are reused or recycled at end of life in a safe and cost-effective manner. This bill would require a battery supplier, as defined, to be responsible for, among other duties, ensuring the responsible end-of-life management of a vehicle traction battery for which notice is given and reporting information to the department, as provided. The bill would impose related duties on a secondary user, as defined, and a secondary handler, as defined, including, among other duties, ensuring the responsible end-of-life management for a vehicle traction battery or returning a vehicle traction battery to the battery supplier, as provided. The bill would also require a remanufacturer, as defined, and a battery recycler, as defined, to conduct various activities regarding a vehicle traction battery, as provided. This bill would require the battery supplier to pay the department’s actual and reasonable regulatory costs to implement and enforce these provisions.

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

**SB 632** **(Arreguín D)** **Community colleges: California College Promise.**
**Last Amend:** 6/10/2026
**Status:** 8/5/2026-August 5 set for first hearing. Placed on suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law establishes the California College Promise, under the administration of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges, to provide funding, upon appropriation by the Legislature, to each community college meeting prescribed requirements. Existing law authorizes a community college to use that funding to waive some or all of the fees for 2 academic years for first-time community college students and returning community college students, as defined, who are enrolled in 12 or more semester units or the equivalent, or fewer for students certified as “full time” by

a staff person in the disabled student services program, as specified, and who complete and submit either a Free Application for Federal Student Aid or a California Dream Act application, except as provided. This bill would instead require, for purposes of eligibility for the California College Promise, that students be enrolled in 9 or more, rather than 12 or more, semester units or the equivalent, or fewer for a student certified as eligible, based on a commitment by the student that is analogous to the 9-semester-unit or equivalent workload, by a staff person in the disabled student services program.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Oppose | Sarah (1) | County Operations |

**SB 758** **(Umberg D)** **Public health: nitrous oxide.**
**Last Amend:** 6/24/2026
**Status:** 8/5/2026-August 5 set for first hearing. Placed on suspense file.
**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, subject to certain exceptions. The bill would authorize a city or county or city and county to adopt an ordinance imposing greater restrictions on the retail sale of nitrous oxide provided the ordinance does not restrict legitimate uses, as specified.

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

**SB 769** **(Caballero D)** **The Golden State Infrastructure Corporation Act.**
**Last Amend:** 7/2/2025
**Status:** 8/4/2026-From inactive file. Ordered to third reading.
**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: local jurisdictions.**
**Last Amend:** 6/17/2026
**Status:** 8/5/2026-August 5 set for first hearing. Placed on suspense file.
**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. Existing 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. A violation of the State Fireworks Law or the regulations issued pursuant thereto is a misdemeanor. This bill would require the State Fire Marshal to adopt regulations that include provisions for determining when a license is required for fireworks shipped to a California port that will not be sold in California.

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

**SB 876** **(Padilla D)** **Fire and residential property insurance.**
**Last Amend:** 6/25/2026
**Status:** 8/5/2026-August 5 set for first hearing. Placed on suspense file.

**Summary:** Existing law generally regulates classes of insurance, including fire and residential property insurance. Existing law prohibits a policy from limiting or denying a payment of building code upgrade cost on the basis that the insured has decided to rebuild at a new location or to purchase an already built home at a new location. If there is a total loss of the insured structure, this bill would require the building code upgrade cost payable to include all costs that would have been incurred if the insured structure been completely rebuilt at its original location.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Staci (1) | Public Safety & Emergency Management |

**SB 877** (**Pérez** D) **Residential property insurance: loss estimate transparency.**
**Last Amend:** 6/10/2026
**Status:** 8/5/2026-August 5 set for first hearing. Placed on suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law generally regulates classes of insurance, including residential property insurance. Existing law prohibits a policy of residential property insurance from being issued or renewed by an insurer unless the named insured is provided a copy of specified information, including the California Residential Insurance Disclosure. Under existing law, the California Standard Form Fire Insurance Policy requires an insured to notify every claimant that they can request copies of claim-related documents, as defined to include all valuation, measurement, and loss adjustment calculations of the amount of loss, covered damage, and cost of repairs, that the insurer is required to provide within 15 calendar days of the request. Under existing law, it is a misdemeanor to issue or countersign a fire policy that varies from the standard form fire insurance policy. This bill would modify the definition of claim-related documents for purposes of the above-described provisions to include all valuation, measurement, and loss adjustment calculations, whether preliminary or final, that relate to the amount of loss, covered damage, and cost of repairs.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Staci (1) | Public Safety & Emergency Management |

**SB 894** (**Allen** D) **Wildfire resiliency: financial assistance.**
**Last Amend:** 5/14/2026
**Status:** 8/5/2026-August 5 set for first hearing. Placed on suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law establishes the California Alternative Energy and Advanced Transportation Financing Authority to provide alternative methods of financing in providing and promoting the establishment of facilities using alternative methods and sources of energy and facilities needed for the development and commercialization of advanced transportation technologies, as provided. This bill would establish the California Wildfire Resilience Loan Program and would require the authority, upon appropriation by the Legislature, to administer the program to provide financial assistance for projects and activities to reduce wildfire-related risks and losses, including home hardening and defensible space improvements, as provided, and would make related changes.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Staci (1), Tracy (2) | Public Safety & Emergency Management |

**SB 899** (**Grove** R) **Fire prevention: Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force: wildfire smoke.**
**Last Amend:** 5/14/2026
**Status:** 6/24/2026-June 24 set for first hearing. Placed on suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law requires the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force to develop a comprehensive implementation strategy to track and ensure the achievement of the goals and key actions identified in the state's "Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan," as provided. Existing law requires, on or before March 1, 2026, and every 5 years thereafter, the task force to update the action plan. This bill would require the task force, on or before July 1, 2028, and in cooperation with the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, the State Air Resources Board, and the State Department of Public Health, to assess the health costs and impacts of wildfire smoke using existing wildfire smoke and health data, as provided. The bill would require the task force, in developing this assessment, to, among other things, develop a model to determine the approximate health benefits of achieving the goals identified in the action plan and make recommendations on how the action plan can increase its health benefits.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Sponsor | Staci (1) | Forest & Public Lands Stewardship |

**SB 922** **(Laird D) Vehicles: local agency charges: use of streets or highways.**
**Last Amend:** 7/2/2026
**Status:** 8/10/2026-Assembly amendments concurred in. (Ayes 30. Noes 1.) Ordered to engrossing and enrolling.
**Summary:** Existing law prohibits a local agency from imposing a tax, permit fee, or other charge for the privilege of using its streets or highways, other than a permit fee for an extralegal load unless the local agency had imposed the fee prior to June 1, 1989. This bill would explicitly state that a fee, charge, surcharge, or component thereof imposed upon the provider of, or ratepayer for, public services by or for a local agency to recover the cost of street maintenance and repair and other costs associated with the use of its streets, roads, or highways to provide those public services is not a tax, permit fee, or other charge that is prohibited by the provision described above. The bill would provide that nothing in the Vehicle Code prohibits a local agency from imposing or collecting this fee, charge, or surcharge.

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

**SB 934** **(Wiener D) Sexual orientation or gender identity change efforts.**
**Last Amend:** 6/3/2026
**Status:** 8/5/2026-August 5 set for first hearing. Placed on suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law defines “sexual orientation change efforts” as practices by mental health providers that seek to change an individual’s sexual orientation, as specified. Existing law prohibits a mental health provider, as defined, from engaging in sexual orientation change efforts with a patient under 18 years of age, and provides that such efforts attempted by a mental health provider are considered unprofessional conduct and must subject the mental health provider to discipline by that provider’s licensing entity. This bill would define “sexual orientation or gender identity change efforts” as any practices of a licensed mental health provider that seek to direct a patient toward a predetermined sexual orientation or gender identity, as specified, and would apply the prohibitions described above to such efforts.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Concerns | Sarah (1) | County Operations |

**SB 935** **(Choi R) Local agency design-build projects: authorization.**
**Status:** 7/16/2026-Approved by the Governor. Chaptered by Secretary of State. Chapter 102, Statutes of 2026.
**Summary:** Current law authorizes a local agency, as defined, with approval of its governing body, to procure design-build contracts for public works projects in excess of $1,000,000, awarding the contract either to the lowest bid or the best value. Current law, among other requirements for the design-build procurement process, requires specified information submitted by a design-build entity to be certified under penalty of perjury. These provisions authorizing local agencies to use the design-build procurement process are repealed on January 1, 2031. This bill would repeal the above-described January 1, 2031, repeal date, thereby extending the operation of these provisions indefinitely.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Eric (1) | Community & Economic Development, County Operations |

**SB 936** **(Blakespear D) Nitrous oxide: sales.**
**Last Amend:** 7/2/2026
**Status:** 8/5/2026-August 5 set for first hearing. Placed on suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law makes it a misdemeanor to possess nitrous oxide with the intent of inhaling it for specified purposes, including to cause intoxication. Existing law also makes it a misdemeanor to sell nitrous oxide to any person under 18 years of age. Existing law makes it a misdemeanor to dispense nitrous oxide to a person and knowing that the person will use it for specified prohibited purposes, if that person then causes death or great bodily injury to themselves or another person. Existing law, 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, except as specifically exempted, prohibit the sale and distribution of a nitrous oxide container that is capable of holding more than 8 grams of nitrous oxide or from which an individual may directly inhale nitrous oxide. The bill would also prohibit the sale and distribution of a nitrous oxide that has, or is marketed as having, the taste or smell of any food. The bill would prohibit knowingly selling or distributing a device that allows an individual to inhale nitrous oxide from the container or hold nitrous oxide for the purposes of inhalation. The bill would punish a violation of these provisions as an infraction, as specified.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
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| Sponsor | John (1) | Public Safety & Emergency Management, Solid Waste Management |

**SB 947** (McNerney D) **Employment: automated decision systems.**
**Last Amend:** 7/2/2026
**Status:** 8/5/2026-August 5 set for first hearing. Placed on suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing 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 (ADS) that have been proposed for use, development, or procurement by, or are being used, developed, or procured by, any state agency. Existing law establishes the Labor and Workforce Development Agency, which is composed of various departments responsible for protecting and promoting the rights and interests of workers in California, including the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement, led by the Labor Commissioner, within the Department of Industrial Relations. This bill would prohibit an employer, as defined, from using an ADS to perform certain functions and would limit the purposes for and way in which an ADS may be used. The bill would authorize a worker to request, and require an employer to provide, a copy of the most recent 12 months of the worker's own data primarily used by an ADS to make a disciplinary, termination, or deactivation decision, as specified. The bill would require an employer that primarily relied upon an ADS to make a disciplinary, termination, or deactivation decision to provide the affected worker with a written postuse notice, as specified. This bill would prohibit an employer from discharging, threatening to discharge, demoting, suspending, or in any manner discriminating or retaliating against any worker for taking certain actions asserting their rights under the bill.

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

**SB 951** (Reyes D) **Employment: technological displacement: notice.**
**Last Amend:** 7/2/2026
**Status:** 8/5/2026-August 5 set for first hearing. Placed on suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law establishes the Labor and Workforce Development Agency, which is composed of various departments responsible for protecting and promoting the rights and interests of workers in California, including the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement, led by the Labor Commissioner, within the Department of Industrial Relations. Existing law establishes the Employment Development Department (EDD), which is administered by the Director of Employment Development. Under existing law, the Director of Employment Development is vested with specified duties, purposes, responsibilities, and jurisdiction related to job creation activity functions, among other things. Existing law, the California Worker Adjustment and Retraining Act (Cal/WARN Act), prohibits an employer from ordering a mass layoff, relocation, or termination at a covered establishment unless, 60 days before the order takes effect, the employer gives written notice of the order to the employees affected by the order and to the EDD and certain local officials. Existing law makes an employer who fails to give specified notice regarding a mass layoff, relocation, or termination subject to a civil penalty of not more than $500 for each day of the employer's violation. This bill would revise the Cal/WARN Act to also require an employer giving notice of a mass layoff, relocation, or termination caused in whole or in substantial part by an artificial intelligence (AI) system or other automated technology replacing or automating employment positions to include certain information in the notice, including the job functions performed by workers that will be automated by AI.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Oppose Unless Amended | Sarah (1), Tracy (2) | County Operations |

**SB 954** (Blakespear D) **California Environmental Quality Act: advanced manufacturing facilities: exemption.**
**Last Amend:** 5/14/2026
**Status:** 8/5/2026-August 5 set for first hearing. Placed on suspense file.
**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. CEQA defines various terms, including "natural and protected lands" for its purposes. This bill would revise the definition of that term to include habitats for protected species identified as candidate, sensitive, or species of special status by state or federal agencies.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Oppose Unless Amended | John (1) | CEQA |

**SB 973** **(Becker D) Wildfire County Coordinator Program.**
**Last Amend:** 6/9/2026
**Status:** 8/5/2026-August 5 set for first hearing. Placed on suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law establishes the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force and requires the task force to develop a comprehensive implementation strategy to track and ensure the achievement of the goals and key actions identified in the state's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan, as provided. Existing law requires, on or before March 1, 2026, and every 5 years thereafter, the task force to update the action plan. This bill would require the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to (1) establish recommended guidance for the use of available wildfire risk modeling and analysis tools by organizations, as specified, (2) develop guidance and tools related to wildfire risk assessments, (3) support the development, updating, or procurement of county-level wildfire risk assessments, (4) maintain oversight authority for the Wildfire County Coordinator Program, as provided, and (5) develop guidance and templates for the creation or revision of county-level wildfire resilience prioritization and implementation plans, and accompanying guidance for integrating these plans with related wildfire resilience programs, as provided. This bill would provide in code for the Wildfire County Coordinator Program to support county-level coordination of and capacity for wildfire mitigation, prevention, preparedness, and recovery activities, as specified.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Staci (1) | Forest & Public Lands Stewardship |

**SB 989** **(Blakespear D) Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment (CARE) Court Program.**
**Last Amend:** 6/18/2026
**Status:** 8/5/2026-August 5 set for first hearing. Placed on suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law, the Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment (CARE) Act, authorizes specified persons, including a person with whom the respondent resides, family members, and first responders, among others, to petition a civil court to create a voluntary CARE agreement or a court-ordered CARE plan and implement services, to be provided by county behavioral health agencies, to provide behavioral health care, including stabilization medication, housing, and other enumerated services, to adults who are currently experiencing a severe mental illness and have a diagnosis identified in the disorder class schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders, and who meet other specified criteria. This bill would authorize a first responder to contact the county behavioral health agency in the county in which the individual resides or is found to request the agency file a petition to commence the CARE process. The bill would require the agency to review the request and determine whether to file a petition within 30 business days. The bill would require the agency, upon completion of the review, to notify the first responder that made the referral of specified information, including whether or not a petition was filed. Because the bill would require a higher level of service from county agencies, this bill would create a state-mandated local program.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Removal of Opposition | Sarah (1) | Health Care & Social Services |

**SB 997** **(Caballero D) North Fork Kings Groundwater Sustainability Agency: lien authority.**
**Status:** 7/13/2026-Approved by the Governor. Chaptered by Secretary of State. Chapter 86, Statutes of 2026.
**Summary:** The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act requires all groundwater basins designated as high- or medium-priority basins by the Department of Water Resources to be managed under a groundwater sustainability plan or coordinated groundwater sustainability plans, except as specified. The act authorizes any local agency or combination of local agencies overlying a groundwater basin to decide to become a groundwater sustainability agency for that basin. The act deems certain agencies created by statute to manage groundwater the exclusive local agencies within their respective statutory boundaries with powers to comply with the act and authorizes these agencies to opt out of being the exclusive groundwater management agency. Existing law establishes the North Fork Kings Groundwater Sustainability Agency, requires the agency to be a groundwater sustainability agency under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act for that portion of the Kings Subbasin that lies within the boundaries of the agency, and requires the agency to develop and implement a groundwater sustainability plan to achieve sustainable groundwater management within the territory of the agency. Existing law generally specifies the powers of the agency, including the power to impose fees, including, but not limited to, permit fees and fees on groundwater extraction or other regulated activity, to fund the costs of a groundwater sustainability program. This bill would authorize the agency to impose civil penalties on any person who extracts groundwater in excess of the amount that person is authorized to extract under a rule, regulation, ordinance, or resolution adopted by the agency. If any charges for water and other services imposed by the agency pursuant to its authority remain unpaid, the bill would authorize the amount of unpaid charges, in the discretion of the agency, to be secured at any time by filing for record in the office of the county recorder of any county a certificate specifying the amount of the charges and the name and address of the person liable for the charges. The bill would require that, from the time of recordation of the certificate, the amount required to be paid together with interest and penalties would constitute a lien upon all real property in the county owned by the person or afterwards, and before the lien expired, acquired by that

person.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Eric (1) | Water & Wildlife |

**SB 1005** **(Caballero D) Local agency: payment: rounding amount.**
**Last Amend:** 7/2/2026
**Status:** 7/2/2026-Read third time and amended. Ordered to third reading.
**Summary:** Existing law requires a public agency to accept specified methods of payment for designated obligations. This bill would authorize a local agency to round the amount of any payment made wholly or partly in cash to the local agency, or any refund or other amount tendered wholly or partly in cash by the local agency, to the nearest $0.05. The bill would apply to a local agency only if the governing body of the local agency adopts, by majority vote, a resolution to make its provisions applicable to the local agency.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Sponsor | Sarah (1) | County Operations |

**SB 1016** **(Blakespear D) Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment (CARE) Court Program and court-ordered evaluations.**
**Last Amend:** 7/2/2026
**Status:** 8/5/2026-August 5 set for first hearing. Placed on suspense file.
**Summary:** Under the Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment (CARE) Act, existing law requires the Judicial Council to develop a mandatory form for use to file a CARE process petition with the court and any other forms necessary for the CARE process, to be signed under the penalty of perjury, and requires the form to contain certain information, including either a specified affidavit of a licensed behavioral health professional or evidence the respondent was detained for a minimum of two intensive treatments pursuant to specified provisions of law. Existing law, the Lanterman-Petris-Short Act (LPS Act), generally provides for the evaluation, treatment, and civil commitment of persons with mental health disorders and other specified persons. Existing law authorizes, under a superior court order, an evaluation of a person alleged, as a result of mental disorder, to be a danger to themselves or others or to be gravely disabled, and provides the forms to use for these evaluations. The CARE Act authorizes a court to terminate a respondent’s participation in the CARE process if the court determines that the respondent is not participating in the CARE process or is not adhering to their CARE plan, as specified, and authorizes the court to order the court-ordered evaluation under the LPS Act. If the court finds the petitioner has made a prima facie showing that the respondent is, or may be, a person eligible for the CARE program, the court is required to order the county behavioral health agency, or their designee, as specified, to submit a written report to the court with specified information, including, but not limited to, a determination whether the respondent meets, or is likely to meet, the criteria for the CARE process and conclusions and recommendations about the respondent’s ability to voluntarily engage in services. This bill would require the written report to include conclusions about whether the respondent is likely to need a higher level of care than is available under the CARE Act and, if so, recommendations about the appropriate level of care and the necessary steps to obtain that level of care for the respondent and remove the authorization for a court to dismiss the petition if the respondent is only likely to enroll in behavioral health treatment. If the court intends to dismiss a petition because the respondent needs a higher level of services, the bill would authorize the court to order the county to conduct a prepetition screening and hold the CARE petition open until the screening is complete.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Oppose | Sarah (1) | Health Care & Social Services |

**SB 1075** **(Reyes D) Air resources: toxic air contaminants: criteria air pollutants: community emissions reduction programs: local community emissions reduction plans.**
**Last Amend:** 7/2/2026
**Status:** 8/5/2026-August 5 set for first hearing. Placed on suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law requires the State Air Resources Board to prepare a statewide strategy to reduce emissions of toxic air contaminants and criteria air pollutants in communities affected by a high cumulative exposure burden that includes an assessment and identification of those communities. Existing law requires the statewide strategy to be updated at least once every 5 years. Existing law requires the state board, based on the assessment and identification, to select locations around the state for preparation of community emissions reduction programs. Existing law requires the assessment and identification to prioritize disadvantaged communities, as defined. Existing law requires the regional air quality management district or the regional air pollution control district encompassing the location selected by the state board, within one year of selection, to adopt a community emissions reduction program to achieve emissions reductions for the location selected using cost-effective measures, as provided. Existing law requires the state board to provide grants to community-based organizations for technical assistance and to support community participation in the implementation of the statewide strategy. Under this existing regulatory authority, the state board provides grants to

development and implement local community emissions reduction plans. This bill would revise the definition of "disadvantaged community" to include a disadvantaged unincorporated community. By expanding the definition of "disadvantaged community," the bill would expand the duties of districts in the preparation of community emissions reduction programs, thereby imposing a state-mandated local program.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Removal of Opposition | John (2), Staci (2), Tracy (1) | Community & Economic Development |

**SB 1085** **(Durazo D)** **Water supply planning: housing developments.**
**Last Amend:** 6/17/2026
**Status:** 8/6/2026-Read second time. Ordered to third reading.
**Summary:** The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires a lead agency, as defined, to be responsible for determining whether a project is exempt from CEQA and whether an environmental impact report, a negative declaration, or a mitigated negative declaration is required. Existing law requires a city or county that determines a certain type of project is subject to the requirements of CEQA to identify any public water system that may supply water for the project and to request those public water systems to prepare a specified water supply assessment, as provided. This bill, among other things, would instead require a city or county, upon receipt of a preliminary application for a housing development project that meets certain conditions, or upon a development application for certain projects being determined as complete or deemed complete, to make that identification of public water systems. The bill would require a city or county, within 15 days of receiving an application that meets either of the above-mentioned criteria, to request each identified public water system to determine whether the projected water demand associated with the proposed project was included in the most recently adopted urban water management plan.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Pending | Eric (2), John (1) | CEQA, Water & Wildlife |

**SB 1116** **(Caballero D)** **Planning and zoning: housing development projects: subdivisions.**
**Last Amend:** 7/2/2026
**Status:** 8/6/2026-Read second time. Ordered to third reading.
**Summary:** Under the Planning and Zoning Law, the legislative body of a city or county may adopt ordinances that, among other things, regulate the use of buildings, structures, and land, as provided. The Subdivision Map Act vests the authority to regulate and control the design and improvement of subdivisions in the legislative body of a local agency and sets forth procedures governing the local agency's processing, approval, conditional approval or disapproval, and filing of tentative, final, and parcel maps. Existing law authorizes a development proponent to submit an application for a housing development project on a subdivided lot, as specified, that meets specified requirements, and requires a local agency to ministerially consider that application, as specified. Existing law prohibits a local agency from imposing on a housing development on a lot subdivided as specified an objective zoning standard, objective subdivision standard, or objective design standard that, among other things, physically precludes the development of a project built to specified densities. However, with respect to certain lots, existing law allows a local agency to impose a height limit of no less than the height allowed pursuant to the existing zoning designation applicable to the lot. This bill would require the height limits under these provisions to apply exclusively to the physical height of a building rather than the number of floors. The bill would additionally prohibit a local agency from imposing specified front or internal setbacks, except as specified.

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

**SB 1117** **(Cervantes D)** **Accessory dwelling units and junior accessory dwelling units.**
**Last Amend:** 7/8/2026
**Status:** 8/6/2026-Read second time. Ordered to third reading.
**Summary:** The Planning and Zoning Law provides for the creation by ordinance, or by ministerial approval if the local agency has not adopted an ordinance, of an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) in accordance with specified standards and conditions. Existing law requires fees charged for the construction of ADUs to be determined in accordance with specified provisions of the Mitigation Fee Act. Existing law prohibits a local agency, special district, or water corporation from imposing any impact fee upon the development of an ADU that has 750 square feet of interior livable space or less, and requires any impact fees charged for an ADU that has more than 750 square feet of interior livable space to be charged proportionately in relation to the square footage of the primary dwelling unit. This bill would require the charge for certain accessory dwelling units to be based only on the area in excess of 750 square feet of interior livable space. By changing the duties of local agencies with regard to calculating fees for ADUs, the bill would impose a state-

mandated local program.

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

**SB 1159** **(Cabaldon D)** **Artificial intelligence: transparency and governance.**
**Last Amend:** 6/25/2026
**Status:** 7/2/2026-Read second time. Ordered to third reading.
**Summary:** The California Constitution provides that people have the right of access to information concerning the conduct of the people's business. Various provisions of existing law, including the California Public Records Act, the Legislative Open Records Act, the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act, and the Ralph M. Brown Act, provide, with some exceptions, for public access to government records and meetings of government bodies. Among those acts, the California Public Records Act defines "person" to include any natural person, corporation, partnership, limited liability company, firm, or association. This bill would specify that, for purposes of the California Public Records Act, the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act, the Ralph M. Brown Act, the Legislative Open Records Act, the Administrative Procedure Act, the California Coastal Act of 1976, and CEQA, "person," "interested person," "participant," "member of the public," as applicable, and any other similar terms under each act referring to those who may engage with governmental agencies, do not include artificial intelligence, as defined, systems, autonomous agents, or robots, whether physical or digital.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Sarah (1), Tracy (2) | Community & Economic Development, County Operations |

**SB 1187** **(Durazo D)** **Open meetings.**
**Last Amend:** 7/6/2026
**Status:** 8/3/2026-Read second time. Ordered to third reading.
**Summary:** The Ralph M. Brown Act requires, with specified exceptions, that all meetings of a legislative body, as defined, of a local agency be open and public and that all persons be permitted to attend and participate. Existing law, beginning July 1, 2026, requires eligible legislative bodies, as defined, to have in place a system for electronically accepting and fulfilling requests for meeting agendas and documents. Existing law additionally requires these legislative bodies to translate the agenda for each meeting of that body and to reasonably assist members of the public who wish to translate a public meeting or receive interpretation, as specified. This bill would instead delete the above-described requirements on eligible legislative bodies.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Sarah (1) | County Operations |

**SB 1191** **(Ochoa Bogh R)** **Communications: universal service programs.**
**Last Amend:** 6/8/2026
**Status:** 8/5/2026-August 5 set for first hearing. Placed on suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law authorizes the Public Utilities Commission to supervise and regulate every public utility in the state, including telephone corporations, and to fix just and reasonable rates and charges for public utilities. Existing law establishes the state's 6 universal service funds in the State Treasury, including the California High-Cost Fund-A Administrative Committee Fund (CHCF-A) and the California High-Cost Fund-B Administrative Committee Fund (CHCF-B), and provides that moneys in each of the state's universal service funds are the proceeds of rates and are held in trust for the benefit of ratepayers and to compensate telephone corporations for their costs of providing universal service. Moneys in the funds may only be expended to accomplish specified telecommunications universal service programs, upon appropriation in the annual Budget Act or upon supplemental appropriation. The CHCF-A program, until January 1, 2028, requires the commission to develop, implement, and maintain a suitable program to establish a fair and equitable local rate structure aided by universal service rate support to small independent telephone corporations that serve rural areas and are subject to rate-of-return regulation by the commission. The CHCF-B program, until January 1, 2028, requires the commission to develop, implement, and maintain a suitable, competitively neutral, and broad-based program to establish a fair and equitable local rate support structure aided by universal service rate support to telephone corporations serving areas where the cost of providing services exceeds rates charged by providers, as determined by the commission. This bill would extend the CHCF-A program and CHCF-B program requirements to January 1, 2033.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
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|---|---|---|
| Support | Tracy (1) | Community & Economic Development |

**[SB 1193](#)** **([Wahab](#) D) Discretionary funds: County of Alameda.**
**Last Amend:** 4/30/2026
**Status:** 8/3/2026-Read second time. Ordered to third reading.
**Summary:** Existing law authorizes a county board of supervisors to appropriate and expend county general fund money to establish county programs or fund other programs to meet various social needs of the county population and the needs of physically, mentally, and financially handicapped persons and aged persons. Existing law authorizes the board of supervisors to contract with other public agencies, private agencies, or individuals to operate programs that the board of supervisors determines will serve public purposes. Existing law prohibits an Orange County Board of Supervisors member from awarding district discretionary funds to a community organization or a nonprofit organization unless the board of supervisors approves that award by a majority vote. Existing law requires the Orange County Board of Supervisors to post on its internet website a log of appropriated district discretionary funds at the end of each quarter, as specified. Existing law prohibits, within 90 days preceding an election, an Orange County Board of Supervisors member who is on the ballot as an Orange County Board of Supervisors member candidate and has an opponent on that ballot from taking any action related to spending district discretionary funds, as specified. This bill would prohibit the Alameda County Board of Supervisors from awarding discretionary funds, as defined, to a community organization, nonprofit organization, or private entity, unless the board of supervisors approves that award by a majority vote and the award includes a description of how the award provides resources of communitywide significance for the district that the member of the board requesting the award represents and identifies the public purposes, as defined, that the award will serve.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Oppose | Sarah (1) | County Operations |

**[SB 1244](#)** **([Allen](#) D) Public Agency Benefits Intermediary Compensation Disclosure Act.**
**Last Amend:** 6/11/2026
**Status:** 8/6/2026-Read second time. Ordered to third reading.
**Summary:** Existing law requires various disclosures to be made regarding health care service plan and health insurance benefits and coverages. Existing law generally regulates the conduct of business between health care service plans and solicitors and health insurers and broker-agents, including requirements regarding contracts in which the solicitor represents the health care service plan or the broker-agent represents the insurer. This bill, the Public Agency Benefits Intermediary Compensation Disclosure Act, would require a covered service provider, defined to mean a broker, agent, consultant, or advisor that meets specified criteria, to disclose to a public agency, as defined, or its group health plan the direct and indirect compensation it expects to receive for providing brokerage or consulting services, among other information, before it enters into, extends, renews, or materially amends a contract or arrangement for brokerage services or consulting services with the public agency or its plan. The bill would also require a covered service provider to disclose compensation and material financial interests related to a covered health care benefits arrangement that the covered service provider recommends, places, renews, services, or materially influences for the public agency or its group health plan. Disclosure would be required under these provisions if the covered service provider reasonably expects it would receive $1,000 or more in compensation during the term of the contract or arrangement. The bill would require these disclosures at specified times.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Sarah (1) | County Operations |

**[SB 1305](#)** **([Richardson](#) D) Wildlife: bears.**
**Last Amend:** 7/2/2026
**Status:** 8/5/2026-August 5 set for first hearing. Placed on suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law establishes the Department of Fish and Wildlife in the Natural Resources Agency. Under existing law, the department has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and management of fish, wildlife, native plants, and habitat necessary for biologically sustainable populations of those species. This bill would require the department to develop and make publicly available a roadmap that evaluates whether, and under what conditions, reintroduction of the grizzly bear is feasible and advisable, and the extent to which the ecological functions once provided by the grizzly bear may be restored through human-mediated landscape restoration, including through reintroduction of the species. The bill would also require the department, by June 30, 2030, to submit the roadmap document to relevant budget and policy committees of the Legislature, the Legislative Analyst’s Office, and the Fish and Game Commission.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
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| Oppose | Staci (1) | Water & Wildlife |

**SB 1312** **(Richardson D) Cemeteries.**
**Last Amend:** 6/18/2026
**Status:** 8/5/2026-August 5 set for first hearing. Placed on suspense file.
**Summary:** The Cemetery and Funeral Act establishes the Cemetery and Funeral Bureau within the Department of Consumer Affairs and sets forth its powers and duties relating to the licensure and regulation of, among others, cemeteries and cemetery authorities. Existing law authorizes the bureau to establish necessary rules and regulations for the administration and enforcement of the act and the laws subject to its jurisdiction and to prescribe the form of statements and reports provided for in the act. This bill would authorize the bureau to establish an advisory committee to assist the bureau in engaging consumers and licensees in its regulatory activities. The bill would require the advisory committee, if established by the bureau, to include at least one member from licensed representatives of the death care industry, members of the public, and representatives of local governments.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Concerns | Sarah (1) | County Operations |

**SB 1326** **(Wahab D) California Environmental Quality Act: tribal cultural resources: mitigation measures.**
**Last Amend:** 6/11/2026
**Status:** 8/5/2026-August 5 set for first hearing. Placed on suspense file.
**Summary:** The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires a lead agency, before releasing an environmental review document for a project, to begin consultation with a California Native American tribe that is traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of the proposed project, as provided. CEQA authorizes the parties, as a part of the consultation, to propose mitigation measures capable of avoiding or substantially lessening potential significant impacts to a tribal cultural resource or alternatives that would avoid significant impacts to a tribal cultural resource. CEQA defines a tribal cultural resource as including, among other things, a site, feature, place, cultural landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe that is included or determined to be eligible for inclusion in the California Register of Historical Resources or included in a local register of historical resources, as provided. This bill would modify the definition of tribal cultural resource to, among other things, include a site, feature, place, cultural landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe that is identified by the Native American Heritage Commission as a sacred place, as provided, or included in a local tribal register and provided to the lead agency by a consulting California Native American tribe.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Oppose Unless Amended | John (1) | CEQA |

**SB 1329** **(McNerney D) Real property tax: valuation: active solar energy system.**
**Last Amend:** 7/1/2026
**Status:** 8/5/2026-August 5 set for first hearing canceled at the request of author.
**Summary:** The California Constitution generally limits the maximum rate of ad valorem tax on real property to 1% of the full cash value of the property and defines “full cash value” for these purposes as the appraised value of real property when purchased, newly constructed, or a change in ownership has occurred after the 1975 assessment. Pursuant to constitutional authorization, existing property tax law excludes from the definition of “newly constructed” for these purposes the construction or addition of any active solar energy system, as defined, through the 2025–26 fiscal year, except as specified. This bill would prescribe rules for the valuation of an active solar energy system under certain valuation methods, including a requirement that, under the income method, the assessor exclude from income the benefit from, among other things, renewable energy credits, as defined.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Oppose | John (2), Sarah (1) | County Operations |

**SB 1370** **(Stern D) Covered wildfire mitigation projects: consolidated and expedited review.**
**Last Amend:** 7/2/2026
**Status:** 8/5/2026-August 5 set for first hearing. Placed on suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law establishes in the Natural Resources Agency the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, which is known as and may be referred to as CAL-FIRE. Existing law establishes in CAL-FIRE the Office of the State Fire Marshal and requires that office to establish the Community Wildfire Mitigation Assistance Program to coordinate regional and local efforts with state policies, strategies, and programs for community wildfire mitigation in order to improve wildfire preparedness and prevention, with an emphasis on the most vulnerable communities. This bill would require that, notwithstanding any other law, any state-level environmental and resource permits, approvals, consultations,

and reviews required for a covered wildfire mitigation project, as defined, be consolidated into a single coordinated review by a project review team, as defined, and administered jointly by the consolidated review agencies, defined as the Natural Resources Agency in coordination with the California Environmental Protection Agency. The bill would require an applicant seeking authorization to undertake a covered wildfire mitigation project to submit a single, consolidated application package to the consolidated review agencies. The bill would require an authorization to be rendered by the consolidated review agencies within 60 calendar days of receipt, as provided, and would authorize the applicant and the consolidated review agencies to agree to extend the 60-day timeline if both parties agree more information is required.

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

**SB 1382** **(Alvarado-Gil R) Department of Transportation: mountain passes: openings.**
**Last Amend:** 4/6/2026
**Status:** 8/5/2026-August 5 set for first hearing. Placed on suspense file.
**Summary:** Existing law requires the Department of Transportation, on or before July 1, 1992, to adopt and implement a deicing policy for state highways, as specified. Existing law specifically requires the department to remove snow from a specified portion of Interstate Route 80, as specified. This bill would require, on or before April 1 of each year, the department, to the extent feasible, to notify an affected local official of the department's proposed schedule for opening a mountain pass, as defined. The bill would require the department to develop a public outreach plan to inform the public about the closing and opening of a mountain pass, as specified.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Eric (1) | Transportation |

**SB 1397** **(Alvarado-Gil R) Mountain Lions: human-mountain lion conflicts program: scientific research.**
**Last Amend:** 7/1/2026
**Status:** 8/5/2026-August 5 set for first hearing. Placed on suspense file.
**Summary:** Proposition 117, an initiative measure approved by the voters at the June 5, 1990, statewide primary election, enacted the California Wildlife Protection Act of 1990. The act classifies the mountain lion as a specially protected mammal under the laws of this state, and makes it unlawful to take, injure, possess, transport, import, or sell any mountain lion or any part or product thereof. The act authorizes the take of mountain lions under limited circumstances, including by authorizing the Department of Fish and Wildlife, or an appropriate local agency authorized by the department, to remove or take any mountain lion that is perceived to be an imminent threat to public health or safety. Existing law permits the department, as the department determines is necessary to protect mountain lions or the public, to authorize qualified individuals, educational institutions, governmental agencies, or nongovernmental organizations to implement nonlethal procedures, which are defined as procedures that may include, among other things, capturing, pursuing, or hazing mountain lions. Existing law permits the department to authorize qualified individuals, educational institutions, governmental agencies, or nongovernmental organizations to conduct scientific research involving mountain lions pursuant to a scientific collecting permit, as specified. This bill would require the department, contingent upon an appropriation by the Legislature, to maintain, enhance, and expand its human-mountain lion conflicts program in a specified region of the state in order to protect public health and safety, including by exercising its authority to authorize nonlethal procedures.

| Position | Lobbyist | Main Subject |
|---|---|---|
| Support | Staci (1) | Water & Wildlife |

# Regulatory Matters

RCRC
REPRESENTING CALIFORNIA'S
RURAL COUNTIES

**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:** August 4, 2026

**Re:** California Public Utilities Commission Update

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## Summary

RCRC has been a formal participant in over two dozen regulatory proceedings at the California Public Utilities Commission ("CPUC" or "Commission"), thirteen of which are still open or 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

*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 18 COLRs in the state, of which AT&T is the largest.

On May 28th, the Administrative Law Judge sought comments on the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Network Modernization Order, specifically on the impacts of the Section 214 Service Discontinuance Rule changes. Together with stakeholder partners including the Center for Accessible Technology (CforAT), California Alliance for Digital Equity (CADE), and Media Alliance, RCRC jointly advised the Commission to stay the course. For more details, see Attachments 2 and 3.

*General Order 133 – Wireless Service Quality Proceeding*
In March 2026, RCRC became a formal party to a successor proceeding that established minimum service quality rules for Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP), as well as made enforcement changes that apply to service quality standards for plain old telephone service (POTS) and VoIP. Unfortunately, the final Decision adopted by the CPUC abruptly redlined out wireless standards; instead, the CPUC created this new proceeding dedicated to determine how to create minimum service quality rules for wireless technology.

On June 25th, Nevada County Supervisor Sue Hoek, Lake County Supervisor Jessica Pyska, and Mono County Supervisor Rhonda Duggan were featured in a CPUC workshop on wireless service quality issues, and the impacts network outages have on communities, especially during times of emergencies. The CPUC is considering establishing minimum, enforceable service quality standards for wireless infrastructure, such as timely repairs and restoration of service during outages. This is especially important to ensure that end users can make 9-1-1 calls or receive emergency notifications reliably and continuously. These rural community perspectives demonstrated the need for greater accountability and investments in rural and remote areas, as well as the consequences of the status quo.

Following the workshop, various carriers filed a joint motion on July 6th requesting an evidentiary hearing, essentially doubling down on their assertions that wireless network performance is currently satisfactory.

The CPUC held public participation meetings on July 15th and July 23rd to hear directly from wireless customers on their concerns and opinions of the quality of mobile telephone service they receive, with an emphasis on service outages and restoration.

Per the Commission's schedule, a staff proposal and second workshop are proposed to occur sometime in August 2026, with a proposed decision expected as early as the end of the year.

*Communications Emergency Preparedness and Network Resiliency Program Proceeding*
RCRC is a formal party to a Commission rulemaking to improve outcomes for telecommunications resiliency, such as the ability to withstand power outages in vulnerable areas. RCRC has concerns with the current trajectory of both the energy and communications marketplace to deliver safe, affordable, and uninterrupted utility services.

The CPUC's existing Resiliency Program has 72-hour backup power requirements as well as network redundancy, hardening and other preparedness planning strategies to maintain a sufficient level of service for customers to access 9-1-1 and 2-1-1, as well as ensure infrastructure can distribute emergency notifications to customers *only* in Tier 2 and Tier 3 High Fire Threat Districts (HFTD). The CPUC has observed several challenges to successfully implement this program, which has led to the opening of this new rulemaking.

On July 8th, RCRC urged the CPUC to transform existing telecommunications resiliency data into actionable public safety insights by creating a public mapping tool and dashboard. The tool would provide policymakers, local governments, and communities with a clearer picture of network vulnerabilities, backup power availability, and resiliency gaps to help drive targeted improvements in order to keep critical communications services operational during emergencies, such as power outages. See Attachments 3 and 4.

Per the schedule released by the Commission, public participation hearings or forums and public workshops won't begin until the end of 2026, with a Commission Staff Proposal expected to be released in the first quarter of 2027.

**Energy Issues**

*Safety, Reliability and Resiliency of Electrical Distribution Systems Proceeding*

In July 2024, RCRC became a formal party to this new CPUC rulemaking that will 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 with program reporting, operational guidelines, resource deployments, mitigation strategies, and general resiliency. No progress was made in 2025.

The near-term focus of the proceeding was intended to address how investor-owned utilities collect and aggregate data to establish a foundation of measuring utility outages. Long-term, the proceeding was slated to consider efforts to address emerging threats and evolving priorities, including transparency for customers, short-term reliability, safety, and system resiliency (such as service disruptions from Fast Trip outages), as well as prioritization of reliability investments. Unfortunately, the CPUC seems to have abandoned its longer-term plans for the proceeding.

On July 10th, the CPUC issued a Proposed Decision[1] creating a unified investor-owned utility (IOU) customer reliability report template[2], applying only to the state's three largest electric IOUs. The template would be used by PG&E, Southern California Edison, and San Diego Gas and Electric to report annually. However, as we point out in our feedback, collecting data alone is not meaningful without clear expectations of tangible reliability improvements for impacted areas (see Attachment 6).

Unfortunately, the Commission plans to close the proceeding, foreclosing on future opportunities to refine elements of the reliability report, and potentially integrating Small

[1] The Proposed Decision is available here:
https://docs.cpuc.ca.gov/PublishedDocs/Efile/G000/M610/K354/610354736.PDF The

[2] The Proposed Customer Reliability Report and Template can be accessed here:
https://docs.cpuc.ca.gov/PublishedDocs/Efile/G000/M610/K356/610356277.PDF

and Multi-Jurisdictional Utilities (SMJUs—such as Liberty and PacifiCorp) in the future. The Proposed Decision also denied a motion by the City and County of San Francisco to investigate PG&E for its December 2025 outages through this proceeding, but did not preclude such an investigation from occurring outright.

The Proposed Decision is eligible to be voted on by the Commission on August 13, 2026.

**Water Issues**

The CPUC's Water Division regulates over 100 investor-owned water and sewer utilities that provide service to approximately 16 percent of California residents. Of these, around 95 percent are served by 9 large private water utilities with more than 10,000 connections. The CPUC has the primary responsibility for the regulation of rates, terms of service and operations for the investor-owned utilities under the CPUC's jurisdiction and shares water quality regulatory authority with the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB). Attachment 7 identifies the private water companies regulated by the CPUC in RCRC's member counties.

In the most recent Drinking Water Needs Assessment, the SWRCB noted that although 98.6% of Californians receive drinking water that meets state standards, there are 1,060 public water systems that are either failing to provide safe drinking water or are at risk of failing. Those underperforming public water systems may be ripe for private, Commission-regulated utilities to acquire.

*Public Water System Acquisitions Proceeding*

In July 2022, RCRC became a formal party to a proceeding to review 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. Originally, the proceeding proposed to focus on how to approach acquisitions involving inadequately operated or maintained systems in disadvantaged communities, as well as propose statutory changes to the Public Water System Investment and Consolidation Act of 1997.[3] However, the scope of the proceeding was ultimately narrowed to issues concerning price and valuation, ratepayer impacts, and a timeline for acquisitions for private water utilities.

On July 9, 2026, the Commission adopted a Decision to overhaul the framework governing acquisitions and consolidations of CPUC-regulated water utilities and close the proceeding. The CPUC aims to accelerate and encourage the acquisition of failing, at-risk, and potentially at-risk water systems, while improving transparency and strengthening consumer protections. Among the changes, the CPUC better aligned with definitions used by the SWRCB, established timelines for Commission review, and limited incentives to apply to distressed systems. Overall, the Decision intends to make it easier to bring troubled water systems under the ownership of capable operators while ensuring customers receive greater visibility into rate impacts.

The most controversial issue was the treatment of "gain on sale" principles. The original

[3] This Act generally seeks to achieve economies of scale in public water systems by providing incentives for investor-owned water and sewer utilities to acquire smaller systems (that often need capital improvements) by requiring the CPUC to use fair market value as a basis for setting rates of the acquired system.

Proposed Decision largely sided with the water utilities' position and rejected applying gain-on-sale treatment to acquisitions, finding that doing so could chill voluntary consolidation efforts. However, shortly before the Commission's vote (and after the comment period closed), the CPUC redlined the Proposed Decision to remove the prohibition and instead preserve the Commission's discretion to consider gain-on-sale allocations on a case-by-case basis in future consolidation proceedings. The California Water Association argued this last-minute change created significant uncertainty for buyers and sellers because the financial treatment of a transaction could no longer be known in advance. While the final Decision was widely viewed as a major modernization of the water consolidation framework, the eleventh-hour revisions on gain-on-sale became the principal point of contention between the CPUC and the water utility industry.

**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 Joint Opening Comments, COLR Proceeding (June 10, 2026)
- Joint Reply Comments, COLR Proceeding (June 17, 2026)
- RCRC Opening Comments, Telecom Resiliency Proceeding (July 8, 2026)
- RCRC Reply Comments, Telecom Resiliency Proceeding (July 22, 2026)
- RCRC Opening Comments, Energy Safety, Reliability and Resiliency Proposed Decision (July 30, 2026)
- List of CPUC Regulated Water Utilities in RCRC Counties

# RCRC OPEN CPUC PROCEEDINGS LIST

| PROCEEDING | PROCEEDING NUMBER* | FORMAL PARTY STATUS DATE | DESCRIPTION | STAFF CONTACT |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Microgrids | R.19-09-009 | February 4, 2020 | Framework for the commercialization of microgrids to achieve community resiliency. | John Kennedy<br>Leigh Kammerich |
| 2. Self-Generation Incentive Program (SGIP) | R.20-05-012 | August 20, 2020 | Incentive funding for large IOU customer-level energy storage resources to reduce peak energy demand. | John Kennedy<br>Leigh Kammerich |
| 3. Biomethane Standards and Requirements | R.13-02-008 | 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<br>Staci Heaton |
| 4. AT&T COLR Relief | A.23-03-003 | April 3, 2023 | Application of AT&T California to be relieved of its Carrier of Last Resort (COLR) obligations without a replacement COLR. | Tracy Rhine<br>Leigh Kammerich |
| 5. BEAD Program | R.23-02-016 | August 31, 2023 | Considers rules to implement federal Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program for last mile infrastructure. | Tracy Rhine<br>Leigh Kammerich |
| 6. High DER | R.21-06-017 | October 10, 2023 | Seeks to prepare the electric grid for a high number of distributed energy resources (DER). (DERs are small-scale energy objects, such as EV batteries or rooftop solar, that can be connected or shifted to the distribution system.) | John Kennedy<br>Leigh Kammerich |
| 7. DIVCA Changes | R.23-04-006 | 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<br>Leigh Kammerich |
| 8. Energization Timelines | R.24-01-018 | 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<br>Leigh Kammerich |

| PROCEEDING | PROCEEDING NUMBER* | FORMAL PARTY STATUS DATE | DESCRIPTION | STAFF CONTACT |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9. Renewables Portfolio Standard, Continued | R.24-01-017 | March 13, 2024 | Continues the implementation, oversight, and administration of the California RPS program; will incorporate future legislation as mandated. | John Kennedy<br>Leigh Kammerich |
| 10. Safety, Reliability and Resiliency of Electricity | R.24-05-023 | July 8, 2024 | Considers changes to existing policies, procedures, and rules regarding the safety, reliability and resiliency of electrical distribution systems. | John Kennedy<br>Leigh Kammerich |
| 11. COLR Changes | R.24-06-012 | July 25, 2024 | Considers changes to Carrier of Last Resort (COLR) rules governing universal access to essential telecommunications services. | Tracy Rhine<br>Leigh Kammerich |
| 12. Telecom Emergency Preparedness and Network Resiliency | R.25-07-014 | September 30, 2025 | Considers modifications to the current network resiliency rules for communication service providers. | Tracy Rhine<br>Leigh Kammerich |
| 13. General Order 133 – Wireless Service Quality | R.26-02-017 | *Pending* | Considers changes to minimum service quality standards and enforcement mechanisms for wireless phone service. | Leigh Kammerich<br>Tracy Rhine |
| Wildfire Mitigation Plans** | Energy Safety Docket | 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 Proceeding to Consider Changes to the Commission's Carrier of Last Resort Rules* | Rulemaking 24-06-012<br>(Filed June 20, 2024) |

**JOINT OPENING COMMENTS OF THE RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES OF CALIFORNIA, CALIFORNIA ALLIANCE FOR DIGITAL EQUITY, CENTER FOR ACCESSIBLE TECHNOLOGY, AND MEDIA ALLIANCE ON ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE'S RULING SOLICITING COMMENTS ON FCC SECTION 214 DISCONTINUANCE RULES CHANGE IMPACT**


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Dated: June 10, 2026

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**
**OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

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| *Order Instituting Rulemaking Proceeding to Consider Changes to the Commission's Carrier of Last Resort Rules* | Rulemaking 24-06-012<br>(Filed June 20, 2024) |

**JOINT OPENING COMMENTS OF THE RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES OF CALIFORNIA, CALIFORNIA ALLIANCE FOR DIGITAL EQUITY, CENTER FOR ACCESSIBLE TECHNOLOGY, AND MEDIA ALLIANCE ON ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE'S RULING SOLICITING COMMENTS ON FCC SECTION 214 DISCONTINUANCE RULES CHANGE IMPACT**

## 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"), California Alliance for Digital Equity ("CADE"), Center for Accessible Technology ("CforAT"), and Media Alliance submits joint comments to *Administrative Law Judge's Ruling Soliciting Comments on FCC Section 214 Service Discontinuance Rules Change Impact* ("Ruling"), issued May 28, 2026. RCRC and CforAT were granted party status on July 25, 2024, via an e-mail ruling from ALJ Glegola. CADE submitted a motion for party status on April 24, 2026, which is currently pending, and joins these comments in anticipation of party status being granted. Media Alliance was granted party status on October 2, 2024 via an email ruling from ALJ Glegola.

## II. Discussion

RCRC, CADE, CforAT and Media Alliance appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Network Modernization Order (NMO). In short, the NMO has no adverse effect on the CPUC's authority to set or modify carrier of last resort (COLR) rules.

**Background**

As a threshold matter, even on its own terms, the NMO is best understood as a procedural reform to the Section 214 discontinuance process at the federal level; it is not a comprehensive reallocation of federal and state authority over retail service obligations, and does not prohibit the CPUC from ordering common carriers to provide intrastate telephone services as carriers of last resort. The NMO streamlines the federal framework governing when and how carriers may discontinue legacy voice service and its underlying infrastructure to facilitate the transition to a higher-quality, IP-based network through consolidated discontinuance rules and expanded eligibility for streamlined approval. The NMO does not hold that all state service obligations are preempted, nor does it establish that states lack authority to impose independent, generally applicable telecommunications service within their borders. Therefore, there is no need to "harmonize" rules to the FCC's order, as the Ruling questions.

More fundamentally, even if the FCC's order was intended to preempt the CPUC's authority to set or modify COLR rules under California law, the FCC lacks such power. California's COLR rules arise from the State's core police powers to protect public safety, ensure continuity of essential communications services, and promote universal access. Courts have consistently recognized that, absent clear congressional intent, federal law should not be read to displace state authority in areas such as consumer protection, emergency preparedness, and access to essential infrastructure. Such congressional intent is wholly absent here.

To the contrary, the Communications Act expressly preserves state authority over intrastate communications. (47 U.S.C. § 152(b).) This includes the explicit authority to "order" telecommunications carriers to provide intrastate services to unserved areas. (47 U.S.C. § 214(e)(3).) In a decision directly applicable to the current circumstance, the U.S. Supreme Court found Section 152(b) constitutes "a congressional denial of power to the FCC. . . . . To permit an agency to expand its power in the face of a congressional limitation on its jurisdiction would be to grant to the agency power to override Congress." (Louisiana Pub. Serv. Comm'n v. FCC, 476 U.S. 355, 374-75 (1986)). Indeed, states' authority over COLR obligations aligns with Congress's intent in the Telecommunications Act of 1996 to preserve state authority to impose "requirements necessary to preserve and advance universal service, protect the public safety and welfare, ensure the continued quality of telecommunications services, and safeguard the rights of consumers." (47 U.S.C. § 253(b)). Regardless of the NMO, the CPUC retains its authority, which it has exercised – and should continue to vigorously exercise – through the existing COLR requirements.

Universal service requirements to provide access to basic telephone service is technology-neutral. The obligation to ensure that all Californians have access to basic communications service is fundamentally an intrastate issue. State COLR rules do not regulate the act of discontinuance within the meaning of Section 214; rather, they regulate who must serve end users and under what conditions within the state. Technology-neutral laws, like California's, define what service must be provided, not what legacy technology should be preserved. Copper is one implementation, not the legal requirement itself. The obligation is to provide the service reliably and universally, not specifically over copper wires. Fiber infrastructure, for instance, is simply a newer, higher-capacity, and generally more reliable[1] method of delivering the same or better service. Saying COLR rules require a copper network specifically is like claiming modern mail trucks violate parcel delivery requirements because the original system used horses.

**<u>AT&T's Disingenuous Interpretation of the NMO is Chaotic</u>**

AT&T's most recent Attestation[2] as well as its FCC petition for COLR preemption[3] fundamentally misunderstands the purpose of COLR and the service it provides to customers. First, the Attestation demonstrates that AT&T is attempting to redefine COLR as a narrow obligation tied only to maintaining a specific legacy technology—plain old telephone service or POTS—rather than a broader obligation to ensure reliable, universally available voice service. The Attestation repeatedly emphasizes that COLR "effectively requires it to provide POTS"[4] and frames compliance almost entirely in terms of maintaining legacy TDM-based infrastructure, even when higher quality infrastructure is available to reliably deliver voice communications.

But that framing omits the core purpose of COLR to guarantee that every customer, especially in lower density, hard-to-serve or vulnerable communities, has access to dependable, affordable voice service regardless of market conditions. By focusing on the technical characteristics of POTS rather than the functional outcomes for customers, the Attestation treats COLR as a burden tied to a specific network architecture, rather than a consumer protection obligation. It also minimizes the continuing role of wireline reliability, including for 9-1-1 access, medical monitoring, and other power-dependent devices, by emphasizing declining usage and the availability of substitutes, rather than examining whether those substitutes are equivalent in reliability, coverage, and resiliency for all customers.

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[1] Service continuity during power outages depends on the availability of back-up power.

[2] See *Pacific Bell Telephone Company D/B/A AT&T California (U 1001 C) Response to Administrative Law Judge's Ruling Ordering AT&T California Attestation and Verification*, served May 29, 2026 to R.24-06-012 Service List.

[3] See *In the Matter of Petition of AT&T for Preemption and Declaratory Ruling Regarding California's Carrier of Last Resort and Related Requirements*, WC Docket No. 26-125, filed May 20, 2026.

[4] Page 8, AT&T Attestation. See also page 11, AT&T Preemption Petition.

Second, AT&T's petition to the FCC characterizes California's universal service laws as outdated, but does so by essentially equating "outdated" with "no longer being aligned with AT&T's preferred investment strategy." The petition generally argues that COLR rules are relics of a monopoly era and impose unnecessary costs because few households in their territory still rely on traditional POTS, and most customers have access to multiple alternatives. Again, this argument fundamentally misunderstands universal service policy.

And critically, AT&T's own filings undercut its narrative that COLR obligations are an unsustainable barrier to investment. AT&T acknowledges significant and ongoing planned capital investment such as a $19 billion commitment to expand fiber and wireless infrastructure in California through 2030.[5] At the same time, in its FCC petition, AT&T argues that maintaining COLR obligations diverts resources away from modernization and prevents investments in next-generation networks. These positions are difficult to reconcile with the company's broader financial posture. In its 2025 Annual Report, AT&T issued more than $12 billion to its stockholders—50% more than in 2024.[6] The math of legacy obligations as a barrier to adequately serve customers or achieve profitability simply doesn't add up. COLR obligations are being framed as a constraint not because they make modernization impossible, but because they require AT&T to continue serving customers and communities they don't want to prioritize for maintenance upgrades because it is *less* profitable (not unprofitable) to do so.

**CPUC Should Stay the Course**

CPUC should continue to consider changes to COLR rules as scoped in this proceeding. While the Staff Report[7] focused on market competition to assess COLR relief (i.e. defining "limited consumer choice" and "significant consumer choice" areas), CPUC should instead renew its focus on reforming the elements of basic service that COLRs such as AT&T perceive to be a technological barrier to provide higher quality service over next-generation infrastructure, such as fiber. The end result of updating California's COLR regime must uphold the principles of attaining reliable, universal service upon request and the best way to do so is by updating the elements of service that must be available to end users.[8]

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[5] See AT&T Makes $19 Billion Commitment to Bring High-Speed Connectivity to California, May 20, 2026.
[6] See *AT&T Leading the Next Era of Connectivity, 2025 Annual Report, https://investors.att.com/financial-reports/annual-reports/2025* accessed June 2, 2026.
[7] See *Administrative Law Judge's Ruling Issuing Staff Proposal for Comment*, issued December 15, 2025.
[8] See *OPENING COMMENTS OF THE RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES OF CALIFORNIA ON ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE'S RULING ISSUING STAFF PROPOSAL*, January 30, 2026; and *REPLY COMMENTS OF THE RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES OF CALIFORNIA ON ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE'S RULING ISSUING STAFF PROPOSAL*, February 13, 2026.

## III. Conclusion

RCRC, CADE, CforAT and Media Alliance appreciates your consideration of our comments and the recommendations contained herein.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ *Leigh Kammerich*

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Dated: June 10, 2026

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF

THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

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|---|---|
| Order Instituting Rulemaking Proceeding to Consider Changes to the Commission's Carrier of Last Resort Rules. | Rulemaking 24-06-012 (Filed June 20, 2024) |

**JOINT REPLY COMMENTS OF THE RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES OF CALIFORNIA, CALIFORNIA ALLIANCE FOR DIGITAL EQUITY, CENTER FOR ACCESSIBLE TECHNOLOGY, AND MEDIA ALLIANCE ON ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE'S RULING SOLICITING COMMENTS ON FCC SECTION 214 DISCONTINUANCE RULES CHANGE IMPACT**


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June 17, 2026

## Table of Contents

## I. INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to Rule 6.2 of the California Public Utilities Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure and the May 28, 2026, Administrative Law Judge's (ALJ) Ruling Soliciting Comments on FCC Section 214 Service Discontinuance Rules Change Impact (ALJ Ruling), the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), California Alliance for Digital Equity (CADE), Center for Accessible Technology (CforAT), and Media Alliance submit these timely reply comments.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) recently issued an order that purports to preempt state jurisdiction over intrastate telephone services.[1] The ALJ Ruling asks parties to "provide a detailed explanation of how the FCC's revised rules impact the Commission's COLR Rules," and "whether and how the Commission must harmonize its COLR Rules to comply with the FCC's Order and how the Commission could do so in a manner that meets both the FCC's requirements and federal and state universal service obligations."[2] While multiple providers and provider organizations submitted comments on the ALJ Ruling, these comments provide no new information or argument for the Commission to consider. Rather, they offer a litany of excuses that the providers have previously submitted in multiple filings asserting that they should not be required to provide vital communications services to Californians.

While these excuses may be persuasive to the FCC, California legislators, or providers' shareholders, they should not be accepted by the Commission. Rather, the Commission should recognize them as one of many attempts by industry to distract from the key issue in this

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[1] Fed. Comm. Comm'n., *In the Matter of Reducing Barriers to Network Improvements and Service Changes* (WC Docket No. 25-209) *and Accelerating Network Modernization* (WC Docket No. 25-208), FCC 26-19, released March 27, 2026.
[2] ALJ Ruling at p. 1.

proceeding, i.e. how the Commission can best ensure that everyone in California has access to essential telephone service that meets reasonable standards of quality, reliability and affordability. The Commission should afford providers' claims no weight.

## II. DISCUSSION

### A. Providers Admit that They Intend to Eliminate Service, Not Transition Customers to New Technology.

While providers have previously asserted that their goals in seeking modification (or elimination) of COLR requirements are to support a transition to advanced technology, their opening comments appear to have dropped this pretense. Perhaps emboldened by the FCC's facially invalid Order,[3] providers now admit that their true goal is to obtain authorization to stop serving large groups of customers.

Consolidated is the most direct about its desire to abandon POTS customers, stating that "the Commission should carefully evaluate the federal preemption framework that the FCC has established before adopting any condition on COLR relief that would have the practical effect of *requiring ILECs to serve customers* for which the FCC has granted the ILEC discontinuance under Section 214."[4] That is, Consolidated wants to read the FCC's actions as allowing them to cease providing universal service.

While Frontier is more opaque, its comments focus on its desire to invest in areas "where those investments will have the greatest marketplace impact," (i.e., generate the most profit),[5] set prices at whatever level Frontier chooses,[6] and increase its market dominance.[7] AT&T has

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[3] *See* Comments of RCRC, CADE, CforAT, and Media Alliance at pp. 2-3.
[4] Consolidated Comments at p. 4; *see* Frontier Comments at p. 16.
[5] Frontier Comments at p. 9.
[6] *See* Frontier Comments at p. 11.
[7] *See* Frontier Comments at p.

similarly stated that "there is no reason to require the COLR to deploy another modern network just so the COLR can offer basic service and cease using its copper network."[8]

Providers' requested changes to the COLR rules are not about, and have never been about, expanding access to advanced communications services. They are about maximizing profits at the expense of universal service and public safety. The Commission should bear this in mind when considering Providers' arguments.

### B. Providers' Comments Fail to Acknowledge California's Core Police Powers and Authority over Intrastate Communication Services.

As RCRC, CADE, CforAT, and Media Alliance and other parties have previously argued, the FCC cannot preempt the Commission's authority to impose "requirements necessary to preserve and advance universal service, protect the public safety and welfare, ensure the continued quality of telecommunications services, and safeguard the rights of consumers."[9] The Commission's power to impose those requirements is a part of California's broad police power.[10] Providers' comments do not address this bright-line rule whatsoever, instead dogmatically insisting that the FCC has the blanket authority to preempt any state activity.[11]

In their comments providers recite statements from the FCC Ruling, but they fail to address the Communications Act's express preservation of state authority over intrastate communications.[12] As RCRC, CADE, CforAT, and Media Alliance have previously argued, the

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[8] Pacific Telephone Company D/B/A AT&T California's (U 1001 C) Response to Administrative Law Judge's Ruling Ordering AT&T California Attestation and Verification at p. 11, filed in A.23-03-003 on May 29, 2026 (AT&T Response to ALJ Ruling).
[9] TURN Comments at p. 4; RCRC, CADE, CforAT, and Media Alliance Comments at p. 2.
[10] TURN Comments at p. 4.
[11] Consolidated Comments at p. 5; Frontier Comments at p. 18. The exception to this case is AT&T's comments, which describe the FCC Order and AT&T's other attempts to escape Commission regulation, but provide no analysis or argument at all. AT&T Comments at pp. 1-6. It is unclear why AT&T felt it necessary to file comments that were completely unresponsive to the Commission's questions.
[12] RCRC, CADE, CforAT, and Media Alliance Comments at p. 2, citing 47 U.S.C. §152(b).

Commission retains that authority, which cannot be eliminated regardless of the verbiage in the FCC's Order.[13] The providers' failure to address the longstanding concept of joint state-federal jurisdiction in their comments is fatal to their arguments.

### C. <u>Rather than Addressing the FCC Order, Providers Continue to Misrepresent the Commission's COLR and Basic Service Rules.</u>

The providers' comments do not meaningfully engage with the questions asked in the ALJ Ruling. As noted above, AT&T's comments contain no actual analysis. Consolidated and Frontier provide some limited analysis, but neither set of comments appears to accurately reflect either the state of the law or the state of technology. For example, both Consolidated and Frontier incorrectly assert that the Commission requires providers to use copper networks to provision COLR service,[14] even though the Commission's rules specify that COLRs can use any available form of technology to provision COLR service.[15]

The Commission's basic service elements specifically state that "[i]f at any time, a basic service customer fails to receive a voice-grade connection to the residence and notifies the provider, the basic service provider is required to (1) promptly restore the voice-grade connection, or if not possible (2) *provide basic service to that customer using a different technology* if offered by the provider and if the customer agrees; or (3) allow the customer to discontinue service without incurring early termination fees, if applicable."[16] In other words, not only do the COLR-specific rules allow providers to use the technology of their choice, the basic service rules *themselves* expressly contemplate that a basic service provider may use alternate

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[13] RCRC, CADE, CforAT, and Media Alliance Comments at p. 2.
[14] Frontier Comments at p. 2; Consolidated Comments at p. 4 ("Consolidated understands that POTS contingencies of this sort are no longer allowed, so the COLR rules must be changed to reflect true technological neutrality, including permitting customer transitions to other technology platforms consistent with the FCC's rules, including VoIP and wireless").
[15] D.24-06-024 at pp. 22-23.
[16] D.12-12-038, Appendix A at p. 2.

technology. Based on a plain reading of the rules, Frontier's claims that the Commission would somehow prevent it from fulfilling its COLR obligations using wireless service are meritless.

Frontier claims that "[i]n Frontier's view, [existing COLR rules] mean[] it must continue to invest to maintain its copper network when that capital could be better invested elsewhere, including in modern technologies and services."[17] However, Frontier's "view" is irrelevant. The Commission's rules expressly permit Frontier to provision COLR service using any technology it chooses.[18] Neither Frontier nor any other provider has offered evidence that a COLR has sought to offer COLR service using a non-copper network and been prevented from doing so. Absent such a showing, Frontier's arguments are unsupported, and the Commission is not responsible for Frontier's misunderstanding of the Commission's rules.

Frontier argues that its assertion is more accurate than the actual terms of the Commission's COLR requirements because "the COLR rules require Frontier to obtain Commission permission through a cumbersome formal application procedure to withdraw as a COLR…and that recent precedent suggests that that the Commission will not allow a carrier to relinquish its COLR obligations unless another carrier agrees to take its place."[19] Frontier further complains that "[i]n one recent case where a COLR (AT&T) sought to withdraw as a COLR and no other carrier was willing to assume the COLR obligations, the application was dismissed with prejudice and the COLR was barred from filing another application for relief from its COLR obligations until at least one year after the issuance of a decision closing [the

[17] Frontier Comments at p. 9. However, this has always been the case for COLRs. A COLR is required to provide service to every location in its service territory, whether there is existing infrastructure in place or not. In other words, the COLR requirements have always required that COLR's invest capital in some areas (i.e., areas requesting service) that they might prefer to invest elsewhere. This is not a new concept.
[18] *See* D.24-06-024 at pp. 22-23.
[19] Frontier Comments at p. 6.

proceeding].”[20] In support of these statements, Frontier cites to the Commission’s recent rejection of AT&T’s request for statewide elimination of its COLR obligations.[21]

While Frontier’s statements are facially true, they omit material information that significantly undermines its arguments. In A.23-03-003, the Commission rejected AT&T’s request for COLR relief because AT&T misconstrued the Commission’s intent behind the existing COLR rules,[22] misstated that the Commission abandoned the COLR reverse auction mechanism,[23] and incorrectly argued that granting the application was permissible under the existing COLR rules.[24] D.24-06-024 expressly states:

> It is not clear why AT&T filed this Application, under existing rules, and then attempted to convince the Commission that it should ignore its rules, based on flawed and erroneous assertions regarding the law and regulatory policy that slowed down the adjudication of this proceeding. The scope of this Application is not modest, as AT&T claims. If AT&T had wished to make industry-wide changes to the Commission’s COLR Rules, it could have filed a Petition for Rulemaking under Rule 6.3 of the Commission’s Rules of Practice and Procedure.[25]

Frontier’s comments do not acknowledge that AT&T’s COLR withdrawal application was not permitted under existing Commission rules and that AT&T repeatedly misrepresented the law and the Commission’s rules. Additionally, Frontier does not acknowledge that the Commission is considering revisions to those rules *in this very proceeding*.

Frontier similarly misinterprets D.24-06-024’s finding that none of the mobile wireless providers proffered by AT&T as alternative providers were COLRs as a holding that COLR service may not be provisioned using wireless technology.[26] However, the language of D.24-06-

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[20] Frontier Comments at p. 7.
[21] Frontier Comments at p. 6.
[22] D.24-06-024 at p. 15.
[23] D.24-06-024 at p. 15.
[24] D.24-06-024 at p. 20.
[25] D.24-06-024 at pp. 21-22.
[26] Frontier Comments at p. 8-9.

024 discussing this issue was addressed to whether there were any replacement COLRs in AT&T's service territory at the time of review, not whether wireless providers could *become* COLRs. Additionally, D.24-06-024 did not address whether an existing COLR could provide basic service using wireless service.

## III. CONCLUSION

Providers do not meaningfully discuss the potential impacts of the FCC Order, but instead reiterate arguments they have made repeatedly that the Commission should encourage the deployment of advanced communications services by allowing providers to discontinue universal service. While the Federal Communications Commission may accept a standard that would deprive some communities of the ability to communicate on the hope of increased investment in broadband networks, the Commission need not adopt that faulty, and cruel, view. The Commission should continue move forward with this proceeding based on its authority stemming from California's police power and duty to preserve and advance universal service, protect the public safety and welfare, ensure the continued quality of telecommunications services, and safeguard the rights of consumers.

Respectfully submitted,
June 17, 2026

/s/ Paul Goodman
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# BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
# OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

| | |
|---|---|
| *Order Instituting Rulemaking to Update Communications Emergency Preparedness and Network Resiliency Program* | Rulemaking 25-07-014<br>(Filed July 24, 2025) |

**OPENING COMMENTS OF THE RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES OF CALIFORNIA ON ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE'S RULING**


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Dated: July 8, 2026

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**
**OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

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| *Order Instituting Rulemaking to Update Communications Emergency Preparedness and Network Resiliency Program* | Rulemaking 25-07-014<br>(Filed July 24, 2025) |

# OPENING COMMENTS OF THE RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES OF CALIFORNIA ON ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE'S RULING

## 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 on *Administrative Law Judge's Ruling Ordering Comments on Questions Specific to Scoped Issues* ("Ruling"), issued May 29, 2026, with the deadlines for opening and reply comments extended via an email ruling by ALJ Goldberg on June 16, 2026. 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. Discussion

RCRC appreciates the opportunity to improve the accessibility, usability, and transparency of resiliency data submitted to the Commission, and the opportunity for parties to respond to the Administrative Law Judge's questions in a succinct manner. At the outset, RCRC observes that the Commission currently requires granular reporting from communications service providers through its existing resiliency plan templates, including detailed data on individual facilities, backup power, and deployment capabilities. The value and necessity of this data should not be understated. However, much of this information remains inaccessible to public stakeholders due to confidentiality claims, or is not meaningfully synthesized for public or policymaker use. The Commission's own findings demonstrate that substantial resiliency gaps continue to exist.[1] In this context, RCRC emphasizes that, while providers must continue to improve outcomes stemming from resiliency requirements, there is a significant opportunity in the near term for the Commission to more effectively utilize the data it already collects for greater public insight, including for public agencies, to drive enhanced results for customers.

As a result, our initial comments and recommendations largely focus on the need to better utilize existing data, enhance transparency, and prioritize measurable outcomes. RCRC offers these observations based on the current record and reserves the ability to refine or supplement its position in reply comments as the record develops. We organize our feedback by the topics listed in the ALJ's Ruling.

### A. Resiliency Data Reporting

The questions posed in this section generally seek input on how the Commission can improve the collection, standardization, and accessibility of resiliency data, including appropriate levels of aggregation, reporting formats, and updates to data submission requirements. RCRC suggests the primary or near-term focus of the Commission be to improve the usability and display of the data it already collects. Specifically, we recommend the CPUC develop a centralized, public-facing dashboard that aggregates resiliency data at an appropriate level (e.g. county, census block, etc.) and presents it through a geospatial mapping tool, not unlike Cal OES's data dashboard per SB 341.

Currently, detailed, facility-level resiliency data, including geospatial information, backup power characteristics, and mobile generator deployment logistics, is largely maintained as confidential and is not synthesized or presented in a manner that enables policymakers, local governments, or the public to meaningfully assess network vulnerabilities or resiliency gaps.

A mapping tool could allow stakeholders to identify locations that lack sufficient backup power, redundancy, or deployment capacity—particularly in high fire threat areas—while still protecting confidential information. Providers, meanwhile, should continue to submit annual updates, with notifications of material changes to enable the Commission to shift from collecting data for compliance purposes to using that data to evaluate and drive resiliency outcomes especially in places where gaps exist. Having past and current data is also beneficial for comparative purposes or to demonstrate improvements and investments over time. Cal OES,

[1] See CPUC, Communications Division *Site Visits Report: Emergency Disaster Relief Program Years 2021, 2022 and 2023; Network Performance and Public Safety* (October 1, 2024).

unfortunately, only provides real time (as in, the past 24 hours) of Active Community Isolations and does not have a searchable archive of reported outage incidents. Instead, the CPUC should have information available by year, such as the year that corresponds to the date of the Resiliency Plan.

**B. Ensuring Compliance**

The questions in this section focus on how the Commission should define, monitor and enforce compliance with resiliency requirements, including potential enforcement mechanisms, audits, and timelines for addressing deficiencies. RCRC suggests delineating compliance in terms of both reporting and performance. Where compliance failures are repeated or significant, the Commission should consider escalating enforcement measures, including penalties or independent audits at the provider's expense. The Commission should also ensure its own oversight processes are able to synthesize data to identify systemic issues and prioritize interventions where they can have the greatest impact, such as public safety outcomes in remote outposts or high fire threat areas.

While investments-in-lieu-of-fines historically had a minimal impact on driving service quality improvements per General Order 133-D, and was later reformed per General Order 133-E, in this context, investments-in-lieu-of-fines may be an appropriate initial escalation tactic for facilities in areas with substantial gaps in backup power or other network resilience to achieve needed results. For example, the Commission should be empowered to target needed investments to troublesome locations, such as areas concentrated with "infeasibility" claims.

Overall, without clear accountability mechanisms, the Resiliency Program risks becoming a procedural exercise rather than a driver of improved network performance. Compliance with submitting a plan should not ultimately absolve a lack of successful performance of resilience and preparedness.

**C. Infeasibility Claims**

The questions in this section address how the Commission should evaluate and verify service provider claims of technical or administrative infeasibility, including the types of documentation and standards that should be required. RCRC supports maintaining a rigorous and well-documented standard for evaluating infeasibility claims. The Commission's own site visit program has demonstrated that facilities identified as infeasible or lacking sufficient backup power often present opportunities for improvement when subjected to closer review.[2] Accordingly, infeasibility claims should be evaluated on a site-specific basis and supported by detailed documentation, such as engineering analyses, permitting records, cost estimates, and assessments of alternative solutions. The Commission should also require periodic reevaluation of such claims, as technological advancements may improve feasibility over time.

Importantly, infeasibility claims should remain a limited exception and not be indefinite, nor a substitute for long-term resiliency planning or investment.

**D. Customer Premise Equipment (CPE) and Collocated Sites**

The questions in this section seek to clarify how resiliency obligations should apply to shared facilities and Customer Premises Equipment (CPE), including the allocation of responsibility and associated costs among service providers. As demonstrated in the Commission's report,[3] ambiguity around responsibility at shared and collocated facilities can lead to underreporting and inconsistent compliance. Cost-sharing arrangements may be appropriate, but should not delay implementation. Providers should retain responsibility for coordinating resiliency measures at shared sites and ensure all relevant facility can be accounted for in reporting.

**E. Expansion beyond High Fire Threat Districts (HFTDs)**

The questions in this section explore whether and how the Resiliency Program should be expanded beyond Tier 2 and Tier 3 High Fire Threat Districts (HFTDs), including appropriate risk criteria, data inputs, and cost considerations. Energy disruptions, for example, including from Public Safety Power Shut-offs (PSPS) and/or Protective Equipment and Device Settings (PEDS) may occur outside of Tier 2 and Tier 3 HFTDs, under particular criteria deigned by the utility if conditions warrant. As such, RCRC supports expanding the Resiliency Program beyond Tier 2 and Tier 3 HFTDs, using a risk-based approach for near-term prioritization to improve redundancy. The Commission could utilize PSPS post-event reports and PEDS reports provided in utility Wildfire Mitigation Plans to determine how to expand the footprint of the Resiliency Program requirements. The Commission should also consider overlaying reported energy outages with the mapping tool described above in Section A to pinpoint areas most vulnerable during extreme weather events, or that are otherwise prone to service disruptions, where residents may face an elevated risk of losing access to 911 and other emergency communications and therefore require

[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.

more resilient and reliable means of receiving emergency alerts, warnings, and critical public safety information.

## F. Mobile Generators

The questions in this section examine the role of mobile backup generation in meeting resiliency requirements, including deployment strategies, planning assumptions, and limitations during large-scale emergency events. The Commission's site visit findings highlight a growing reliance on mobile generators as a primary compliance strategy, while also identifying significant logistical and operational limitations associated with their deployment. In many cases, deployment times exceed available battery backup, and large-scale events may overwhelm available generator capacity.

The Commission's broader Network Exam reports provide important context for these limitations as well. Through a data-driven review of service quality, outage patterns, and infrastructure conditions of AT&T California and Frontier California's wireline networks, the Commission found that service outages increase during adverse weather events and that existing networks "are not as robust as they need to be" to withstand environmental conditions.[4] These findings underscore that disruptions requiring backup power are not rare or isolated occurrences, but rather predictable stress events that should be planned for in advance.

RCRC recommends that the Commission establish clearer expectations for mobile generator deployment, including planning assumptions, prioritization frameworks, and interoperability standards. At the same time, the Commission should avoid overreliance on mobile generators as a long-term solution by encouraging greater fixed, on-site solutions. Reliance on mobile generators is a reactive strategy that may not align with the scale and frequency of outages identified in the Network Exam or Cal OES data. Instead, mobile deployment should function as a supplemental measure, paired with more durable investments in on-site battery backup and hardened infrastructure to ensure continuity of service when access or deployment timelines are constrained.

## G. Wildfire Resilience

The questions in this section focus on how the Commission can strengthen wildfire-related resiliency measures, including improving coordination with electric utilities and infrastructure

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[4] See California Public Utilities Commission, Communications Division, *Network Exam Report: Examination of the Local Telecommunications Networks of AT&T California and Frontier California* (April 2019).

hardening strategies. The Commission should adopt a "dig once" approach to ensure that communications providers and electric utilities coordinate undergrounding efforts whenever possible. Given that electric utilities may develop 10-year undergrounding plans pursuant to Senate Bill 884, this should give the Commission insight into future coordination opportunities with telecom providers.

Rebuilding efforts often occur within fragmented frameworks, resulting in missed opportunities to enhance long-term investments. Establishing formal coordination and compliance requirements, data-sharing protocols, joint-planning processes, and a Commission ombudsman for local agencies to maximize opportunities, efficiency would improve and assurances that infrastructure upgrades would be durable and holistically feasible for ratepayers long-term. Undergrounding and coordinated system upgrades (versus incremental measures) fundamentally improve infrastructure that would otherwise be repeatedly exposed to extreme conditions, and is more like to provide greater and lasting public safety benefits than repeated, short-term repairs or stopgap solutions.

**H. Wildfire Mitigation Reporting**

The questions in this section address how providers should incorporate wildfire preparedness and mitigation planning into their filings, including whether to integrate such requirements into existing resiliency plans or establish separate reporting processes. RCRC recommends wildfire mitigation planning be integrated into existing Communications Resiliency Plans rather than through additional, separate reporting processes. Integrating wildfire mitigation into existing plans that document backup power, network hardening, and emergency preparedness will improve coherence and reduce duplicative administrative burdens.

In addition, the continued degradation in outage performance observed during the Commission's Phase 2 Network Examination[5] reinforces the need for more cohesive planning frameworks that allow the Commission to evaluate how these elements interact over time, rather than reviewing them in isolation. Integrating wildfire mitigation into existing resiliency plans would better position the Commission to assess whether combined strategies are effectively improving outcomes for in high-risk areas.

[5] See California Public Utilities Commission, Communications Division, *Network Exam Phase II Report: Examination of the Local Telecommunications Networks and Related Policies and Practices of AT&T California and Frontier California* (June 17, 2021).

An immediate need is for communications providers to document vegetation management around its facilities and poles, and to maintain specific vegetation clearance in regular intervals. Such maintenance should be incorporated into existing Resiliency Plan reports.

## III. Conclusion

RCRC looks forward to the Commission translating current data into actionable insight, improving transparency, and driving measurable outcomes in the future. RCRC appreciates the opportunity to provide these comments and looks forward to reviewing and responding to the perspectives raised by other parties in reply comments.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ *Leigh Kammerich*

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Dated: July 8, 2026

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**
**OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

| | |
|---|---|
| *Order Instituting Rulemaking to Update Communications Emergency Preparedness and Network Resiliency Program* | Rulemaking 25-07-014<br>(Filed July 24, 2025) |

**REPLY COMMENTS OF THE RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES OF CALIFORNIA ON ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE'S RULING**


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**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**
**OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

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| *Order Instituting Rulemaking to Update Communications Emergency Preparedness and Network Resiliency Program* | Rulemaking 25-07-014<br>(Filed July 24, 2025) |

**REPLY COMMENTS OF THE RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES OF CALIFORNIA ON ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE'S RULING**

## 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 reply comments on *Administrative Law Judge's Ruling Ordering Comments on Questions Specific to Scoped Issues* ("Ruling"), issued May 29, 2026, with the deadlines for opening and reply comments extended via an email ruling by ALJ Goldberg on June 16, 2026. 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. Discussion

RCRC appreciates the thoughtful comments submitted by parties identifying several areas of meaningful consensus that should guide the Commission as it continues to mature the Resiliency Program. Nearly all parties recognize that communications resiliency is increasingly critical in California given our experiences with frequent wildfires, Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) events, and other disasters. RCRC believes it is imperative that customers retain continuous access to 9-1-1.[1] Several parties offer

[1] More specifically, minimum service levels include access to 2-1-1 services, the ability to receive emergency alerts and notifications, as well as basic internet browsing during disasters and commercial power outages (in Tier 2 and Tier 3 HFTDs), per Decisions 20-07-011 and D.21-02-029.

constructive recommendations that can improve the implementation of the existing Resiliency Program without requiring sensitive information or imposing overly prescriptive operational requirements.

The lived experiences of customers in rural communities are that unreliable telecommunications and frequent power outages are the norm. Left to their own devices, carriers have little incentive to address these shortcomings, especially in a proactive manner for vulnerable, lower-density, and disadvantaged areas. Opening comments from carriers collectively (and incorrectly) insist that no meaningful problem truly exists. It is, therefore, unsurprising that industry's opening comments are equally unified that no meaningful solution is needed. As other parties have observed, customers have no practical way of determining which providers have invested in backup power or other resiliency measures when making "competitive" choices with whom to seek service.[2] Likewise, the record reflects credibility for the Center for Accessible Technology's (CforAT)[3] criticism of carriers' unsupported assertions that competitive market forces are a panacea for ensuring reliable and resilient telecommunications services.[4]

### A. Resiliency Data Reporting

RCRC appreciates the thoughtful recommendations submitted by several parties regarding greater transparency of resiliency information. The Public Advocates Office (Cal Advocates), the Small Business Utility Advocates (SBUA), and CforAT each recognize that resiliency information should be sufficiently granular and linked to permit meaningful oversight by policymakers, government agencies, and affected communities. Likewise, RCRC continues to believe that the Commission can substantially improve the public understanding of network resiliency through public reporting tools, including those suggested by Cal Advocates.[5] Access to publicly reported information that allows customers and communities to identify geographic resiliency gaps, evaluate improvements over time, and ultimately better coordinate emergency planning should be a priority.

RCRC agrees with CforAT that overly broad confidentiality claims undermine the Commission's ability to develop a transparent evidentiary record. Public interest organizations should not be required to execute restrictive nondisclosure agreements or litigate complex confidentiality disputes merely to assess

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[2] Pages 5-6, *Comments of The Utility Reform Network and the Communications Workers of America, District 9 on the Administrative Law Judge's Ruling Ordering Comments on Questions Specific to Scoped Issues,* July 8, 2026.
[3] Page 5, *Center for Accessible Technology's Comments on Administrative Law Judge's Ruling Ordering Comments on Questions Specific to Scoped Issues*, July 8, 2026.
[4] Page 4, *T-Mobile West LLC's Opening Comments in Response to the Administrative Law Judge's Ruling Ordering Comments on Questions Specific to Scoped Issues,* July 8, 2026.
[5] Page 3, *Opening Comments of the Public Advocates Office on the Administrative Law Judge's Ruling Ordering Comments on Questions Specific to Scoped Issues*, July 8, 2026.

whether carriers are compliant with program objectives. Rural communities often experience the consequences of network failures directly, yet are often the least able to independently verify carriers' claims regarding resiliency investments or emergency preparedness. Excessive confidentiality also frustrates customers' ability to understand the reliability of the services on which they depend and make informed decisions, including how they prepare for emergencies and react when communications fail.

**B. Ensuring Compliance**

CforAT appropriately observes that providers often treat preparation of resiliency plans as the end point of regulatory compliance rather than a step toward achieving the Commission's resiliency objectives.[6] RCRC agrees that the Commission's evaluation should ultimately focus on whether customers retain minimum[7] access to emergency communications, rather than solely whether required documents were timely submitted.

Similarly, Cal Advocates appropriately recommends that compliance be evaluated using objective performance measures and supported through meaningful Commission oversight, such as tiered, progressive enforcement mechanisms.[8] RCRC agrees that accountability measures should be capable of identifying recurring deficiencies and ensuring corrective action where resiliency investments remain inadequate.

**C. Infeasibility Claims**

Among the issues presented in this proceeding, there is a particularly strong justification for strengthening the Commission's review of infeasibility claims. As several parties observe, unsupported infeasibility claims risk undermining the effectiveness of the Resiliency Program. For example, CforAT notes that providers frequently invoke infeasibility without providing sufficient factual support and recommends detailed documentation sufficient for both the Commission and stakeholders to evaluate the reasonableness of such claims.[9] RCRC agrees. The Utility Reform Network (TURN) and Communications Workers of America, District 9 (CWA) likewise observe that carriers often evaluate infeasibility through a lens of whether its spending is economically "justified," rather than when it is technically infeasible.[10] We agree the carriers' approach is inconsistent with the objectives and intent of

[6] CforAT, pages 6.
[7] Per D. 20-07-011 and D.21-02-029.
[8] Cal Advocates, page 6.
[9] CforAT, pages 9-11.
[10] TURN/CWA, page 17.

the Emergency Disaster Relief Program. Cal Advocates' suggestion to mirror the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) definition of technical feasibility is appropriate.[11]

The Commission's own Site Visit Report demonstrates that facilities previously identified as infeasible have, in certain circumstances, proven capable of improvement following additional review.[12] Accordingly, infeasibility should remain an exception rather than a permanent designation. RCRC continues to support requiring periodic reevaluation of infeasibility determinations supported by updated evidence.

**D. Customer Premise Equipment (CPE) and Collocated Sites**

RCRC has no additional comments at this time.

**E. Expansion beyond High Fire Threat Districts (HFTDs)**

RCRC continues to support expansion of the Resiliency Program beyond Tier 2 and Tier 3 High Fire Threat Districts (HFTDs) using risk-based methodology to prioritize broadening implementation. Several parties, including Cal Advocates, TURN and CWA, as well as CforAT correctly observe that communications disruptions are not confined to HFTDs. CforAT further notes that earthquakes, winter storms, extended heat events, and Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) events all create communications risks beyond current program boundaries. [13] RCRC agrees that the Commission should evaluate multiple risk indicators, including historical PSPS activity, repeated outage locations, wildfire exposure, and other demonstrated hazards, when determining future program expansion. This is particularly important for rural areas where limited network redundancy may leave entire communities dependent upon a limited number of facilities during emergencies. TURN and CWA importantly raise the issue of reconciling various state fire maps, including CAL FIRE State Responsibility Areas (SRA) and Local Responsibility Areas (LRA), for the sake of improved communications infrastructure resilience.[14]

**F. Mobile Generators**

RCRC agrees with Cal Advocates which observes deployment logistics, road access, travel time, and large-scale emergency conditions place logistical constraints upon mobile generation.[15] For geographically isolated rural communities, these operational limitations may be especially significant. Cal Advocates also raises important considerations challenging the appropriateness of using mobile generators

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[11] Cal Advocates, page 9.
[12] See CPUC, Communications Division *Site Visits Report: Emergency Disaster Relief Program Years 2021, 2022 and 2023; Network Performance and Public Safety* (October 1, 2024).
[13] CforAT, pages 12-13.
[14] TURN/CWA, pages 23-24.
[15] Page 17-18

to satisfy 72-hour backup power requirements.[16] Accordingly, RCRC continues to believe that mobile generators should be a complementary option and not replace long-term investments in fixed backup power, redundancy, and hardened infrastructure. We agree that mobile generators should generally be utilized in scenarios that require backup power for *longer* than 72 hours.[17]

### G. Wildfire Resilience

The Commission should encourage greater coordination between communications providers and electric utilities when rebuilding infrastructure following wildfire and other disasters. Where electric utilities are already undertaking undergrounding or other major reconstruction projects, communications providers should be expected to participate in coordinated planning to minimize disturbance of public rights-of-way and avoid repeated excavations, reduce long-term costs to the public over time, and accelerate restoration of resilient infrastructure. Coordinated undergrounding opportunities should not be overlooked especially in situations where reconstruction is already occurring and where undergrounding or other hardening measures provide long-term resiliency benefits. Post-disaster reconstruction presents an opportunity to improve infrastructure for long-term resiliency, rather than restoring preexisting vulnerabilities.

### H. Wildfire Mitigation Reporting

RCRC has no additional comments at this time.

## III. Conclusion

There are meaningful opportunities to strengthen the existing program by improving transparency, promoting accountability, and prioritizing measurable outcomes. RCRC likewise supports the urgency and necessity of bolstering emergency preparedness and network resiliency particularly in light of ongoing concerns surrounding the state's largest carrier's handling of network discontinuances[18] and the havoc it will wreck on alternative technologies that are currently insufficient per current rules. RCRC appreciates the consideration of our comments and the recommendations contained herein.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ *Leigh Kammerich*

[16] Cal Advocates, page 20.
[17] Cal Advocates, page 21.
[18] See CPUC letter to AT&T California Re: Discontinuance of AT&T Enterprise Services in California, dated July 14, 2026.

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**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<br>(Filed May 30, 2024) |

# OPENING COMMENTS OF RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES OF CALIFORNIA ON PROPOSED DECISION

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Dated: July 30, 2026

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## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Per Rule 14.3 (b) of the Rules of Practice and Procedure, and as discussed below, RCRC respectfully requests that the Proposed Decision be modified to:

- Require large IOUs to identify circuits or geographic areas experiencing more than eight outages in a calendar year and describe: 1) The primary causes of repetitive outages; 2) The utility's planned corrective actions; 3) Anticipated implementation schedules; 4) Expected reliability improvements following project completion; and 5) Whether the planned corrective actions are funded through existing wildfire, grid hardening, or distribution investment programs.
- Require large IOUs to explain how Protective Equipment and Device Settings (PEDS)—or fast trip settings—have changed over time and whether those changes contributed to observed outage trends on circuits experiencing repeated interruptions.
- Clarify whether the Proposed Decision suspends or replaces PG&E's existing obligation to provide monthly EPSS outage summaries.
- Require the Customer Reliability Schema Reports and an archive of PG&E's monthly EPSS reports to be available in a centralized location on the CPUC's website.
- Modify Section 5 of the Narrative Report Template to replace the 5-year comparative lookback with a 10-year comparative lookback and description of year-over-year performance improvements.
- Require large IOUs to identify whether circuits experiencing repetitive outages are scheduled for future wildfire mitigation or grid hardening projects and, where applicable, identify anticipated completion date.

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<br>(Filed May 30, 2024) |

# OPENING COMMENTS OF RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES OF CALIFORNIA ON PROPOSED DECISION

## I. INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to Rule 14.3 of the California Public Utilities Commission ("Commission" or "CPUC") Rules of Practice and Procedure, the Rural County Representatives of California ("RCRC") submits comments to *Decision Adopting Unified Investor-Owned Utility Customer Reliability Report* ("Proposed Decision"), issued by Assigned Commissioner Matthew Baker on July 10, 2026. 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. DISCUSSION

RCRC appreciates the Commission's interest in reconciling, updating, and improving the reporting associated with the various types of planned and unplanned utility power outages. The Proposed Decision provides greater transparency, highlights opportunities for improvement in energy reliability, and facilitates a better understanding of how significant ratepayer investments in wildfire mitigation and infrastructure hardening have affected customer reliability. Despite billions of dollars in ratepayer investments over the past decade, many rural and fire-prone communities continue to experience frequent and prolonged power outages.

Access to reliable electricity is foundational for a wide variety of individual and community needs, including health, safety, sanitation, education, and emergency response. Beyond this, energy reliability is vital to meet the state's ambitious decarbonization objectives that seek to replace gasoline, diesel, and natural gas with electric alternatives.

Robust reliability reporting is critical to evaluating both whether utilities are meeting the basic needs of the customers they serve and the durability of the infrastructure upon which the state's decarbonization plan is dependent. Enhanced reporting can also help the state determine whether wildfire risk reduction investments are improving reliability or just reducing shareholder risk. The Proposed Decision makes substantial progress toward those objectives.

RCRC appreciates the Commission's decision to retain and expand several reporting components that we previously supported, including reporting on overhead vs. underground infrastructure and conductor type. During the workshop process and in subsequent comments, RCRC emphasized that this data is essential for understanding the relationship between system configuration, wildfire mitigation investments, and customer reliability, especially when evaluating outage performance and future investment priorities.

RCRC appreciates the Commission's continued interest in evaluating how utilities are communicating with customers, public safety partners, and vulnerable constituencies impacted by both planned and unplanned outages. As a result, we support the Commission's expanded reporting requirements concerning customer notifications, communications with public safety partners, and impacts on Medical Baseline and other vulnerable customer populations. Rural counties routinely coordinate emergency response efforts during prolonged outages and Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) events. Improved reporting regarding customer communications and impacts on vulnerable populations will assist both the Commission and local governments in evaluating utility preparedness and identifying opportunities for improvement.

Additionally, we appreciate and support Proposed Decision's incorporation of wildfire mitigation information into the Customer Reliability Report. Integrating reliability reporting with information already submitted through the utilities' Wildfire Mitigation Data Reports appropriately recognizes that energy reliability and wildfire mitigation are increasingly interconnected and should not be evaluated in isolation.

Finally, RCRC supports the Proposed Decision's adoption of a unified Customer Reliability Report that standardizes reliability reporting across California's large IOUs. A consistent reporting framework will improve the Commission's ability to compare utility performance over time while providing local governments and the public with more meaningful information regarding the causes and frequency of electric outages.

These enhancements will provide greater transparency regarding the relationship between system configuration, wildfire mitigation activities, and customer reliability outcomes. Collectively, these changes make meaningful progress toward a more transparent and informative reporting framework.

## III. RECOMMENDATIONS

RCRC generally supports the adoption of the Proposed Decision; however, a few targeted modifications will significantly improve the usefulness of the Customer Reliability Report and provide greater insight into near-term and long-term utility efforts to improve energy reliability. While the Proposed Decision will help to illuminate where reliability problems exist, it does not require utilities to explain why repetitive outages continue to occur or what actions will be taken to improve service reliability. As California taxpayers and ratepayers continue to invest billions of dollars in wildfire mitigation and electric system hardening, the report should provide sufficient information to determine the benefits and consequences of those actions, particularly with respect to impacts on customers in fire-prone communities.

Accordingly, RCRC respectfully recommends the following modifications to strengthen the Proposed Decision's outcomes and provide long-sought certainty that utilities will strive to increase system reliability over the short and long-term.

### A. The Proposed Decision Should Require Utilities to Identify Corrective Actions for Repetitive Outage Circuits

The Proposed Decision significantly improves transparency; however, it is primarily focused on reporting historical performance. As such, the Proposed Decision misses a tremendous opportunity to pair these reports with narrative explanations of the actions utilities will take to reduce the risk of repeated outages in the future.

To improve accountability and signal the Commission's interest in improving reliability, the Customer Reliability Report should require utilities to identify how they intend to address persistently unreliable circuits. Customers experiencing repeated outages are less interested in documenting the frequency of interruptions than in understanding <u>when</u> reliability improvements will occur. Likewise, local governments require information regarding planned infrastructure improvements to better coordinate emergency planning, economic development, and community resilience efforts.

As part of this proceeding, RCRC suggested requiring utilities to explain the root problem for segments experiencing repeated outages *and* proposed solutions to prevent future outages.[1] Similarly, Marin, Napa, and Sonoma Counties suggested requiring PG&E to "provide details on the work in progress or being planned to harden circuits that have had five or more outages in a calendar year, including whether circuits are not slated for hardening because PG&E eventually plans to underground them."[2] We agree with Marin, Napa, and Sonoma Counties when they expressed that "it is unacceptable to allow PG&E to continue allowing circuits to have 10-plus fast-trip outages year after year. Fast-trip is not a benign outage program with minimal impacts. Each frequent outage circuit creates an equity burden on the customers served by that infrastructure. The Commission must begin focusing on the cumulative impact of fast-trip outages and using the improved reporting data to hold PG&E accountable."[3]

RCRC is troubled that the Proposed Decision will close this rulemaking without taking any affirmative action to require utilities to disclose the planned remedies to address chronic and recurring outages. Frequent outages have dislocating impacts for many rural residents and communities. It is not clear what venue, if any, would provide another opportunity for the Commission to signal its expectations for utilities to not only document persistent outages, but disclose planned actions to reduce the risk of future outages.

RCRC recommends that the Commission require large IOUs to identify circuits or geographic areas experiencing repetitive outages above a defined threshold (perhaps eight outages in a calendar year) and provide, at a minimum, 1) the primary causes of repetitive outages; 2) the utility's planned corrective actions; 3) anticipated implementation schedules; 4) expected reliability improvements following project completion; and 5) whether the planned corrective actions are funded through existing wildfire, grid hardening, or distribution investment programs. This additional information would not fundamentally alter the reporting framework in the

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[1] OPENING COMMENTS OF RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES OF CALIFORNIA ON ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE'S RULING REQUESTING DRAFT PROPOSALS FROM RESPONDENTS AND STAKEHOLDERS REGARDING DATA DEFINITION AND GUIDELINE ENHANCEMENTS, December 13, 2024, page 2.

[2] COMMENTS OF MARIN, NAPA, AND SONOMA COUNTIES ON THE ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE'S RULING REQUESTING DRAFT PROPOSALS FROM RESPONDENTS AND STAKEHOLDERS REGARDING DATA DEFINITION AND GUIDELINE ENHANCEMENTS, December 13, 2024, page 7.

[3] Id.

Proposed Decision and would instead provide important context regarding how utilities intend to improve reliability for customers experiencing recurring outages.

### B. Utilities Should Provide Additional Information Regarding Operational Changes Associated with Protective Equipment and Device Settings (PEDS)

Throughout this proceeding, stakeholders discussed the impact of Protective Equipment and Device Settings (PEDS)—or fast trip—has on electric reliability. The Proposed Decision appropriately distinguishes fast trip outages from other outage categories. However, RCRC suggests strengthening the final reporting framework by requiring the large utilities to explain how these operational protection settings have changed over time and whether those changes contributed to observed outage trends on circuits experiencing repeated interruptions. Providing additional information regarding operational settings, together with planned infrastructure improvements, would improve the Commission's ability to distinguish between outages resulting from temporary operational strategies, from those attributable to underlying infrastructure deficiencies.

### C. The Commission Should Clarify the Proposed Decision's Impact on Existing Monthly EPSS Reporting Obligations

Lastly, the Proposed Decision is silent on how or whether it changes PG&E's existing monthly Enhanced Powerline Safety Settings (EPSS) reporting obligations. While the Proposed Decision correctly notes our comments regarding the importance of continuing the monthly cadence of PG&E's Fast-Trip summaries, it is unclear whether it expects those will continue. PG&E's customers have seen over 2,000 EPSS outages annually for each of the last several years, with several circuits having 20-30 outages annually. These reports provide crucial and timely insight for local and state decisionmakers to gauge reliability impacts throughout the state. We urge the Commission to clarify that this Decision does not suspend or replace the PG&E's obligation to continue providing monthly Fast-Trip outage summaries. If the Proposed Decision intends to replace PG&E's monthly Fast-Trip reporting, the annual Customer Reliability Report is inadequate and should be adjusted to a quarterly cadence.

We further urge the Proposed Decision to modify how the Customer Reliability Schema Report will be available in the future, especially given this OIR is slated to close. At a minimum, these Customer Reliability Reports should be available in a centralized location on the CPUC's website—not just through the Advice Letter Process. This webpage should also contain an archive of PG&E's monthly EPSS reports.

On a related note, the Annual Reporting Template and Customer Reliability Schema Report also appear to erroneously refer to PG&E's EPSS program, rather than reference fast trip in a manner to incorporate other IOU-specific fast trip programs.[4]

**D. The Commission Should Continue to Refine Reliability Trend Reporting**

RCRC previously expressed concern that the joint utilities' reliance on five-year historical comparison may inadvertently normalize the reduced reliability experienced during recent wildfire seasons, when expanded operational mitigation measures have significantly increased outage frequency for many rural customers.[5] Rather than provide an objective comparison, a five-year lookback will hinder efforts to increase reliability and undermine efforts to get utilities to improve local reliability. We continue to be concerned that approval of 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 worldclass economy, and leadership in technological innovation."[6]

Although RCRC appreciates the Commission's efforts to establish consistent historical reporting, the Commission should continue refining its methodology to ensure that trend reporting clearly demonstrates whether customer reliability is improving over time. Accordingly, RCRC recommends that Section 5 of the Narrative Report Template emphasize year-over-year performance improvements while continuing to evaluate longer-term trends over a ***ten-year*** lookback. This will provide a more accurate baseline from which to gauge reliability improvements and provide a clearer picture of whether investments in wildfire mitigation and system hardening are producing measurable benefits to both avoid wildfire risk and improve customer reliability.

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[4] See Appendix A, Section 1 Utility Procedures, Shared Definitions, "Outage Definitions." EPSS is a common acronym for PG&E's Enhanced Powerline Safety Settings program. However, EPSS in this context is "Emergency Power Supply System—EPSS." This is confusing and likely erroneous. "Emergency Power Supply System" should be replaced with Protective Equipment and Device Settings (PEDS), which is a more common acronym used by the CPUC's Energy Division to refer to all utility fast trip settings and programs.

[5] OPENING COMMENTS OF RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES OF CALIFORNIA ON JOINT IOU PROPOSED CUSTOMER RELIABILITY REPORT TEMPLATE, January 9, 2026, page 5.

[6] Id.

### E. The Customer Reliability Report Should Better Connect Reliability Outcomes with Wildfire Mitigation Investments

California's large IOUs continue to make substantial investments in undergrounding, covered conductor installation, sectionalizing devices, vegetation management, and other wildfire mitigation measures. The Customer Reliability Report presents an opportunity to evaluate whether those investments are improving reliability in a targeted manner. Accordingly, RCRC recommends requiring utilities to identify whether circuits experiencing repetitive outages are scheduled for future wildfire mitigation or grid hardening projects and, where applicable, identify anticipated completion dates. Providing this information will improve transparency regarding how utility capital investments are expected to improve reliability while helping local governments understand when infrastructure improvements may occur within their communities.

## IV. CONCLUSION

The Proposed Decision advances much needed standardization and public transparency of customer reliability reporting across the large IOUs. For these reasons, RCRC appreciates your consideration of our comments and the modifications discussed herein.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ *Leigh Kammerich*

Leigh Kammerich
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Rural County Representatives of California
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Dated: July 30, 2026

## APPENDIX A

This Appendix is provided in compliance with Rule 14.3(b) of the Rules of Practice and Procedure and contains RCRC's proposed changes to the Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law, and/or Order.

1. **The following should be added after paragraph 8 to the <u>Findings of Fact.</u> Additions are underlined, and strikethroughs signify deletions.**

   <u>D.19-05-042 adopted Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) Phase 1 Guidelines.</u>

2. **The following should be added after paragraph 8 to the <u>Findings of Fact.</u> Additions are underlined, and strikethroughs signify deletions.**

   <u>D.20-05-051 adopted Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) Phase 2 Guidelines to update additional guidelines to mitigate wildfire risk.</u>

3. **Paragraph 10 of the <u>Findings of Fact</u> should be modified as follows. Additions are underlined, and strikethroughs signify deletions.**

   The complexities of climate change ~~have also caused~~<u>, increasing wildfire risk, and Commission-authorized wildfire mitigation measures including Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) events, Protective Equipment and Device Settings (PEDS) or fast-trip, and other operational practices implemented to reduce wildfire ignition risk, have contributed to</u> newly emerging threats and risks, as well as emerging priorities~~, which~~<u>. These combined factors </u>necessitate a reassessment of current outage reporting practices to the Commission from the utilities.

# CPUC Regulated Water Utilities By County

As of: October 11, 2023

| County Name | Corporate Id | | Utility Name |
|---|---|---|---|
| ALPINE | WTD | 148 | Lake Alpine Water Company, Inc. |
| BUTTE | WTA | 60 | California Water Service Company |
| | WTB | 61 | Del Oro Water Co., Inc. |
| CALAVERAS | WTD | 150 | Cottage Springs Real Estate, LLC |
| COLUSA | WTB | 61 | Del Oro Water Co., Inc. |
| EL DORADO | WTC | 142 | Lukins Brothers Water Company, The |
| | WTD | 98 | Tahoe Swiss Village Utilities, Inc. |
| GLENN | WTA | 60 | California Water Service Company |
| HUMBOLDT | WTB | 61 | Del Oro Water Co., Inc. |
| IMPERIAL | WTA | 133 | Golden State Water Company |
| INYO | WTD | 279 | Owens Valley Water Resources |
| | SWR | 280 | Rolling Green Utilities, Inc |
| | WTD | 280 | Rolling Green Utilities, Inc |
| LAKE | WTD | 422 | Baycliff Water System |
| | WTA | 60 | California Water Service Company |
| | WTA | 133 | Golden State Water Company |
| LASSEN | WTD | 12 | Susan River Park Water Company |
| MADERA | WTC | 190 | Bass Lake Water Company |
| | WTA | 210 | California American Water Company |
| | WTA | 60 | California Water Service Company |
| | SWR | 60 | California Water Service Company |
| | WTD | 193 | Central Camp Water Company, Inc. |
| | WTC | 199 | Yosemite Spring Park Utility Co. |
| MENDOCINO | WTC | 38 | North Gualala Water Works |
| | WTD | 40 | Point Arena Water Works, Inc. |
| | WTC | 41 | Rogina Water Company, Inc. |
| MERCED | WTA | 210 | California American Water Company |
| MONO | WTD | 189 | Twin Lakes Enterprises |
| MONTEREY | WTB | 206 | Alisal Water Corporation |
| | WTD | 208 | Arroyo Center Water Co., Inc. |
| | WTA | 210 | California American Water Company |
| | SWR | 418 | California Utilities Service, Inc. |
| | WTA | 60 | California Water Service Company |
| | SWR | 210 | California-American Water Company |
| | WTD | 433 | Canada Woods Water Company |

# CPUC Regulated Water Utilities By County

As of: October 11, 2023

| County Name | Corporate Id | | Utility Name |
|---|---|---|---|
| | SWR | 433 | Canada Woods Water Company - Sewer |
| | WTC | 214 | Little Bear Water Company, Inc |
| | SWR | 214 | Little Bear Water Company, Inc. |
| | WTD | 215 | Spreckels Water Company |
| NAPA | WTD | 106 | Meyers Water Company |
| PLACER | WTC | 85 | Agate Bay Water Company |
| | WTA | 210 | California American Water Company |
| | WTC | 88 | Fulton Water Company |
| | WTC | 96 | Tahoe Park Water Co. |
| | WTD | 98 | Tahoe Swiss Village Utilities, Inc. |
| | WTC | 100 | Weimar Water Company |
| PLUMAS | WTC | 53 | Graeagle Water Company, Inc. |
| | WTD | 56 | Meadow Valley Water Works |
| SAN LUIS OBISPO | SWR | 311 | Cypress Ridge Sewer Company |
| | WTA | 133 | Golden State Water Company |
| | WTC | 312 | Nacimiento Water Company |
| SANTA BARBARA | WTD | 436 | Casmite Corporation |
| | WTA | 133 | Golden State Water Company |
| SHASTA | WTB | 61 | Del Oro Water Co., Inc. |
| SIERRA | WTD | 82 | Goodyears Bar Water Company |
| | WTD | 83 | R.R. Lewis Small Water Company |
| | WTD | 405 | Sierra City Water Works, Inc. |
| SISKIYOU | WTD | 6 | Macdoel Water Works |
| SOLANO | WTA | 60 | California Water Service Company |
| SONOMA | WTA | 210 | California American Water Company |
| | WTA | 60 | California Water Service Company |
| | WTD | 111 | Cazadero Water Company |
| | WTD | 118 | Kenwood Village Water Company |
| | SWR | 435 | Mayacama Golf Club, LLC |
| | WTC | 120 | Penngrove Water Company |
| | WTC | 126 | Sea Ranch Water Company, The |
| | WTD | 128 | Sereno Del Mar Water Company |
| | WTD | 412 | Sonoma Springs, LLC |
| | WTD | 127 | West Water Company |
| TEHAMA | WTD | 46 | Las Flores Water Works |
| | WTD | 401 | Mira Monte Water Company |
| | WTD | 43 | Riverview Estates Water Company |
| | WTD | 50 | Vista Grande Water System |

# CPUC Regulated Water Utilities By County

As of: October 11, 2023

| County Name | Corporate Id | | Utility Name |
|---|---|---|---|
| TULARE | WTD | 236 | Alpine Village Water Company |
| | SWR | 240 | California Hot Springs Sewer Serv. |
| | WTD | 240 | California Hot Springs Water Serv. |
| | WTA | 60 | California Water Service Company |
| | WTB | 61 | Del Oro Water Co., Inc. |
| | WTD | 248 | Foothill Ditch Company |
| | WTD | 250 | January Water Company |
| | WTD | 256 | Pierpoint Springs Water Co. |
| | WTD | 264 | Sequoia Crest, Inc. |
| TUOLUMNE | WTC | 176 | Cold Springs Water Company, Inc. |
| | WTB | 61 | Del Oro Water Co., Inc. |
| | WTD | 440 | Sierra Park Water Company |
| | WTD | 182 | Slide Inn Water Company |
| | WTD | 184 | Sonora Water Company |
| YOLO | WTA | 210 | California American Water Company |
| YUBA | WTA | 60 | California Water Service Company |

# Other Governmental Affairs Matters

REPRESENTING CALIFORNIA'S RURAL COUNTIES

**To:** Members of the RCRC Board of Directors

**From:** Governmental Affairs Staff
Ad Hoc Chairs
Ad Hoc Vice Chairs

**Date:** August 11, 2026

**Re:** **Report and Update Regarding the Following RCRC Ad Hoc Committees**

1. **Predatory Species Management Ad Hoc Committee**
2. **Recruitment and Retention Ad Hoc Committee**
3. **Sustainable Groundwater Management Act Ad Hoc Committee**

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**Predatory Species Management Ad Hoc Committee**
The Predatory Species Management Ad Hoc Committee held its final regular meeting on August 5, 2026. The Committee's term ends as of the September RCRC Board of Directors meeting, but has requested to meet with the new state Administration in early 2027 as well as continued pursuit of a meeting with Congressman Jared Huffman (D-CA) on predator management issues.

The RCRC Board of Directors adopted new policy into the RCRC Policy Principles in January 2026, as recommended by the Committee. The Committee has also advised RCRC staff on a number of legislative measures moving through the Legislature, including Senate Bill 1305 (Richardson) on grizzly bear reintroduction and Assembly Bill 1722 (Hadwick) which decriminalizes self defense against attacks by animals listed under the California Endangered Species Act.

**Recruitment and Retention Ad Hoc Committee**
The Recruitment and Retention Ad Hoc Committee has met twice and developed a survey to better understand the workforce recruitment and retention challenges facing RCRC member counties, as well as the strategies counties are using to address those challenges.

The survey was piloted with Ad Hoc Committee members in February and, following their feedback, was distributed to all RCRC member counties in May. The survey closed in mid-June, with 29 member counties participating, providing a strong set of data and valuable insights into workforce challenges, regional differences, and county practices.
RCRC staff is currently analyzing the survey results and developing a report summarizing key findings and themes. The Ad Hoc Committee will next meet following the August 19

Board of Directors meeting to review and discuss the results and begin developing recommendations.

The Committee anticipates reporting its findings and recommendations to the Board by the end of the year. The survey results will help inform potential RCRC policy, advocacy, and other efforts to support member counties in addressing ongoing recruitment and retention challenges.

**Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) Ad Hoc Committee**
The Sustainability Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) Ad Hoc Committee most recently met on July 10, 2026. The committee has heard from state representatives, local water districts, and the State Water Project, informing the Supervisors about the ways SGMA is playing out throughout California.

At the time of this writing, the next meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee is scheduled to take place August 13, 2026. The committee will review RCRC's policy principles, and discuss legislative, fiscal, and administrative strategies in order to begin developing recommendations.

The work of the Ad Hoc is expected to conclude by the end of 2026, with new policy principles being presented to the Executive Committee in November and the RCRC Board of Directors in December.

# Business and Administrative Matters

To: Members of the RCRC Board of Directors

From: Christopher Egan, Management Analyst

Date: August 11, 2026

Re: Rural County Photo Contest - **ACTION**

**Summary**

This memo provides information on RCRC's 10th Annual Rural County Photo Contest. The Rural County Photo Contest was created to promote tourism and local economic development by showcasing the beauty, diversity, history, activities, and community spirit found throughout RCRC's member counties. RCRC staff recommends the RCRC Board of Directors cast their votes to determine the contest winner and runners-up.

**Background**

Residents of RCRC's member counties were invited to capture life in rural California by submitting photographs that showcase the scenery, activities, communities, history, and unique charm of RCRC's 40 member counties. Entries for the 2026 Rural County Photo Contest were accepted from July 1, 2026 through July 31, 2026

RCRC staff evaluated all valid entries and selected three finalist photographs to present to the RCRC Board of Directors for consideration. The photograph receiving the highest number of collective votes will be declared the winner.

Consistent with the 2026 contest rules, the winning photographer will receive a $300 gift card, the second-place finalist will receive a $150 gift card, and the third-place finalist will receive a $75 gift card. The winner and runners-up will be notified shortly after the RCRC Board of Directors determines the final rankings.

The 2026 contest marks a decade of celebrating and highlighting the beauty, diversity, and spirit of rural California through photography.

**Judging Criteria**

RCRC staff evaluate all valid entries and select 3 finalist photos to present to the RCRC Board of Directors at the August meeting. The photo with the highest number of collective votes will be deemed the winner. The winner will be notified via email shortly after.

**Staff Recommendation**

RCRC staff recommends that the RCRC Board of Directors cast their votes on the three finalist photographs to determine the contest winner.

The winning photograph will be recognized during the RCRC 2026 Annual Meeting, September 23-25, 2026, at the Hilton Santa Barbara Beachfront Resort in Santa Barbara County, and may be used in RCRC publications, marketing materials, social media, and other work products during the coming year.

**Attachment**

- Rural County Photo Contest Official Rules

**Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC)**
**2026 Rural County Photo Contest**

## OFFICIAL RULES

**NO PURCHASE NECESSARY.**
**A PURCHASE OR PAYMENT OF ANY KIND WILL NOT IMPROVE CHANCES OF WINNING.**
**THE CONTEST WILL BE JUDGED ON SPECIFIC CRITERIA AND HAS NO ELEMENTS OF CHANCE.**

The "Rural County Representatives of California 2026 Rural County Photo Contest" (the "Contest") is sponsored by Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), having a corporate address of 1215 K Street, Suite 1650, Sacramento, California, 95814. Entrant's ("entrant," "you," "your") submission and participation in the Contest shall be governed by the Official Rules contained herein. The Contest is subject to all applicable federal, state, municipal and local laws. VOID WHERE PROHIBITED.

1. Contest open only to legal residents of United States. Entrants must also be at least eighteen (18) years of age. Employees, contractors, officers, and directors of Rural County Representatives of California and its subsidiary and/or affiliated entities, and their immediate family members are not eligible. If you do not meet these requirements, or any other eligibility requirements in these official rules, then you are not eligible to participate in this Contest.

2. All photographs must be submitted electronically at https://www.rcrcnet.org/photo-contest/ or via email to photocontest@rcrcnet.org. Photographs must be high resolution (no less than 300 dpi); .jpeg, .jpg, or .png format; no larger than 10 MB each; and shall not contain any prominently displayed text, "water mark," or logo. Each photograph must be submitted separately. RCRC at its sole discretion shall determine whether text or logos are prominently displayed in the photo.

3. The Contest begins on Wednesday, July 1, 2026, at 8:00 A.M. Pacific Time ("PT") and ends on Friday, July 31, 2026 at 11:59 P.M. PT (the "Entry Period").

4. Entrants will be asked to provide the following information along with their photographs: County where photograph was taken and photographer's full name and email address.

5. You may enter up to three (3) photographs, and you may not use an agency or automated system to enter. RCRC reserves the right to reject any additional entries or entries that do not comply with these Official Rules. By entering, you indicate your unconditional agreement to, and acceptance of, these Official Rules and RCRC's decisions, which are final and binding. You cannot enter the contest unless you comply with all requirements in these Official Rules.

6. Photographs already posted on RCRC's Web pages or entered in any other Contest are not eligible. If a photograph was previously produced for compensation or sold, you must include a brief explanation of the circumstances of the compensation or sale. RCRC may, in

its sole discretion, require a satisfactory release and/or license agreement from the purchaser or source of compensation as a condition of participation in the Contest.

7. Photographs must be taken in one of the 40 RCRC member counties: Alpine, Amador, Butte, Calaveras, Colusa, Del Norte, El Dorado, Glenn, Humboldt, Imperial, Inyo, Kings, Lake, Lassen, Madera, Mariposa, Mendocino, Merced, Modoc, Mono, Monterey, Napa, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, San Benito, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Solano, Sonoma, Sutter, Tehama, Trinity, Tulare, Tuolumne, Yolo, or Yuba.

8. Submitted photographs may not contain material that is violent, inappropriate, sexually explicit, depicts nudity, or is indecent, obscene, hateful, tortious, defamatory, slanderous, or libelous, as determined by RCRC in its sole discretion.

9. Images must originate from a camera-based photograph captured by the entrant. Standard post-processing is permitted, including adjustments to exposure, contrast, white balance, color correction, cropping, sharpening, and noise reduction, whether applied through traditional software or AI-assisted tools, provided such adjustments do not alter the fundamental content of the image. The use of AI-generated content is strictly prohibited, including the creation of images as a whole or in part using generative AI tools. Additionally, AI-based or other digital manipulation that adds, removes, replaces, or invents any element of the scene (including objects, people, skies, backgrounds, or significant features) is not allowed. Entries must remain a truthful representation of the original scene as it was photographed. Touch ups that do not change the character of the image depicted and removal of minor elements that distract from the subject of the image, including those made using AI-assisted tools, may be permitted at RCRC's sole discretion provided that such usage is disclosed and described to RCRC. This would allow, for example, removal of acne on a person's face or an out-of-focus blade of grass in the foreground, provided that the core content of the image remains unchanged.

10. Three finalist photographs will be selected from among all eligible submissions by RCRC staff at their sole discretion in accordance with the criteria set forth in this section. The finalist photographs will be voted upon by the RCRC Board of Directors at the August RCRC Board of Directors Meeting, and the finalist photo with the highest number of votes as determined by RCRC will be deemed the Grand Prize Winner. The finalist photo with the second-highest number of votes as determined by RCRC will be deemed the Second Place Winner, and the finalist photo with the third-highest number of votes as determined by RCRC will be deemed the Third Place Winner. Photographs will be judged on originality, technical excellence, composition, overall impact, artistic merit, and subject matter relevance to rural counties as determined by RCRC at its sole discretion. In the event of any potential tie, the winner of the tie will be selected based on subject matter relevance to rural counties. Decisions of RCRC shall be final and binding. Limit: one (1) prize per person.

11. The Grand Prize Winner will receive the following prize: $300 Amazon Gift Card. The Second Place Winner will receive the following prize: $150 Amazon Gift Card. The Third Place Winner will receive the following prize: $75 Amazon Gift Card. The prizes are non-transferable and non-exchangeable. Any and all prize related expense, including without limitation any and all federal, state and/or local taxes shall be the sole responsibility of the winner. In no event shall RCRC be obligated to award more prizes than the number of prizes

stated in these Rules. The winners will be notified and the prizes will be fulfilled approximately 8-10 weeks after the conclusion of the Entry Period. **The odds of winning will depend on the number of eligible entries received.**

12. The winners will be required to complete and sign an Affidavit of Eligibility/Liability Release and (where imposing such condition is legal) a Publicity Release Form and any applicable forms required by tax authorities which may require a social security number (collectively, the “Prize Forms”), and to return the Prize Forms to RCRC within seven days of being notified. RCRC may disqualify any winner who fails to respond to the prize notification or fails to return the Prize Forms within the seven-day period and, at RCRC’s sole discretion, select an alternate winner. If any prize or prize notification is returned as undeliverable, a winner declines his or her prize, or a winner fails to comply with any of these Official Rules, that winner will be disqualified and an alternate winner may be selected by RCRC.

13. The Grand Prize Winner will be featured during the September RCRC Board of Directors Meeting and in related print, online, and social media presentations. RCRC may elect to feature other submitted photographs at its sole discretion.

14. By entering this Contest, you warrant and represent that all photographs you submit are your own original work, do not infringe on any copyright, invade any right of privacy, contain any defamatory, libelous or slanderous material, or violate any other right of any person or entity, do not include or disclose any trade secrets, proprietary information or other confidential information, and are not otherwise contrary to law.

15. For any photograph submitted in which a person is recognizable, or that contains intellectual property owned by anyone other than the entrant, you must provide a signed release from the intellectual property owner or recognizable subject or, in the case of a minor, the subject’s parent or guardian by the close of the contest submission period. The release must authorize RCRC and its licensees a perpetual right to reproduce, distribute, display, and create derivative works of the submitted photograph in connection with the Contest and promotion of the Contest, or for any other purpose, in any media now or hereafter known, as further described in paragraph 17.

16. RCRC shall have no obligation (express or implied) to use any submitted photograph, or to otherwise exploit any submitted photograph or, if commenced, to continue the distribution or exploitation thereof, and RCRC may at any time abandon the use of the submitted photograph for any reason, with or without legal justification or excuse, and contestants shall not be entitled to any damages or other relief by reason thereof. RCRC has no obligation to publish or use or retain any photographs you submit or to return any photographs to you.

17. RCRC is not responsible for: (a) any late, lost, misrouted, garbled, distorted, or damaged transmissions or entries (including emails rejected due to file size or identified as spam); (b) telephone, electronic, hardware, software, network, Internet, or other computer or communications related malfunctions or failures; (c) any Contest disruptions, injuries, losses or damages caused by events beyond the control of RCRC or by non-authorized human intervention; or (d) any printing or typographical errors in any materials associated with the

Contest. It is Entrant's responsibility to confirm that RCRC has received their electronically submitted photograph.

18. By entering the Contest, entrants grant the RCRC a royalty-free, worldwide, perpetual, non-exclusive license to reproduce, display, distribute, and create derivative works of the entries, in whole or in part, in any media now existing or subsequently developed, for any educational, promotional, publicity, exhibition, archival, scholarly and all other purposes. Any photograph reproduced will include a photographer credit as feasible. RCRC will not be required to seek any additional approval in connection with such uses.

19. You agree that it is your sole responsibility to obtain all permissions necessary for the grant of the rights necessary contained in paragraph 18. You also agree to take, at RCRC's request, any further action (including, without limitation, execution of assignments, transfers, affidavits and other documents) reasonably necessary, as requested by RCRC, to effect, perfect, or confirm RCRC's rights in and to your photograph or other rights granted in these rules.

20. You further grant RCRC the right to use information that you provide as part of your submission, including your name, city, state, and contact information for the following purposes: (a) contact information will only be used to notify you in the event that you are selected as a finalist; (b) name, city, and county may be announced to the public in connection with winning and/or finalist photographs; and (c) name, city, and county may be announced to the public to provide photographer credit, as determined feasible by RCRC.

21. **General Release**. By entering the Contest, you release and hold harmless RCRC from any liability whatsoever, and waive any and all causes of action, related to any claims, cost, injuries, or damages of any kind arising out of or in connection with the Contest or delivery, misdelivery, acceptance, possession, use of or inability to use any prize (including, without limitation, claims, costs, injuries, losses and damages related to personal injuries, death, damage to or destruction of property, rights of publicity or privacy, defamation or portrayal in a false light, whether intentional or unintentional), whether under a theory of contract, tort (including negligence), warranty or other theory.

    Entrants shall understand and agree that all rights under Section 1542 of the Civil Code of California ("Section 1542") and any similar law of any state or territory of the United States that they may have with respect to the release provisions herein are hereby expressly and forever waived. A GENERAL RELEASE DOES NOT EXTEND TO CLAIMS WHICH THE CREDITOR DOES NOT KNOW OR SUSPECT TO EXIST IN HIS FAVOR AT THE TIME OF EXECUTING THE RELEASE, WHICH, IF KNOWN BY HIM/HER MUST HAVE MATERIALLY AFFECTED HIS/HER SETTLEMENT WITH THE DEBTOR.

22. This Contest is subject to all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations. Issues concerning the construction, validity, interpretation and enforceability of these Official Rules shall be governed by the laws of the State of California, without regard to any principles of conflict of laws. All disputes arising out of or connected with this Contest will be resolved individually, and without resort to class action, exclusively by a state or federal court located in Sacramento, California. Should there be a conflict between the laws of the State of California and any other laws, the conflict will be resolved in favor of the laws of the State of

California.  To the extent permitted by applicable law, all judgments or awards shall be limited to out-of-pocket damages (excluding attorneys' fees) associated with participation in this Contest and shall not include any indirect, punitive, incidental, and/or consequential damages.

23. To request a list of winners, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Rural County Representatives of California, 1215 K Street, Suite 1650, Sacramento, California, 95814 by Tuesday, September 1, 2026. Any winner's list request that is received will be sent out after Wednesday, September 30, 2026.

24. Information submitted with an entry is subject to the Privacy Policy stated on the RCRC website. To read the Privacy Policy, visit: https://www.rcrcnet.org/privacy-policy/

**To:** Members of the RCRC Board of Directors

**From:** Dorothy Poole, Government Affairs Operations Manager; Carolyn Jhajj, Communications Director; Lorraine Cummings, Client Relations Representative; Sarah Bolnik, Economic Development Officer; Mary-Ann Warmerdam, Senior Vice President for Government Affairs; and Milena De Melo, Finance Director

**Date:** August 6, 2026

**Re:** 2026 Annual Meeting Overview

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**Summary**

This memo provides an overview of the RCRC 2026 Annual Meeting slated to be held in Santa Barbara County in September.


**Background**

The RCRC 2026 Annual Meeting is scheduled for September 23-25, 2026, in Santa Barbara County at the Hilton Santa Barbara Beachfront Resort. Attendees will enjoy a program of expert panelists and speakers addressing many issues important to California's rural counties. Consistent with previous years, panel discussions will occur throughout the day on Wednesday and again on Thursday morning. Participants will enjoy free time on Thursday afternoon to explore the surrounding area of Santa Barbara County before returning in the evening for a reception and the County Basket Drawing and Auction Dinner, a semi-formal occasion (business attire). The Thursday evening dinner and auction is RCRC's flagship charity event of the year and an Annual Meeting favorite. On Friday, the event will conclude with the RCRC, GSFA, and GSCA Board of Directors meetings.

In anticipation of RCRC's Annual Meeting, here are a few ways Supervisors can prepare for the RCRC event of the year:

- **Registration:** Annual Meeting registration is currently open. The event website is accessible from the RCRC homepage. If you have any questions or need assistance, contact Dorothy Poole at dpoole@rcrcnet.org.

- **County Basket Drawing and Auction:** County Baskets are an important part of the Annual Meeting experience. The baskets, donated by participating RCRC member counties, often contain items representative of the participating member county. RCRC Board Delegates generally lead the efforts to gather basket items that showcase the uniqueness of the county. Each year, the Chair selects one or more charity in his or her county, and the proceeds from the RCRC County Basket Drawing and Auction provide support for those charities.

About Basket Contents

As is tradition, county baskets often contain items representative of the participating member county. It is suggested that the basket value start at a minimum of $200.

In consultation with the RCRC Officers, the following revised guidelines have been adopted for certain basket items:

- ✓ **Live Animals** may be included with a county basket, provided that the animal is not brought onsite to the annual meeting. (The onsite basket should contain a photograph of the animal.) The donor will be solely responsible for custody of the animal prior to the auction, and for arranging appropriate transportation and delivery to the basket winner after the auction.

- ✓ **California Legal firearms** may be included with a county basket, provided that the firearm is not brought onsite to the annual meeting. (This includes the hotel at which the annual meeting is held.) The donor is solely responsible for arranging legal and appropriate transfer of the firearm to the basket winner through a Federal Firearms Licensee after the auction.

- ✗ **Controlled substances** (including cannabis) that are not legal to possess or sell under federal law may not be included in a county basket, even if legal under state law.

Important Dates and Deadlines to Calendar

- ✓ Please bring your county's basket directly to the meeting registration desk when you check-in, for processing and display. Baskets must be dropped off no later than noon on Thursday, September 24th.

- ✓ **A list of the County Basket contents must be submitted no later than Sunday, August 30th** in order to be publicized in advance of the meeting. Publicity includes being featured in the RCRC Annual Meeting app, and on slides at the conference.

County Basket Contents for RCRC Annual Charity Auction 2026 ~ in Santa Barbara County

Submit your basket contents and fair market value using this link, or the QR code provided here.

*Only baskets for which a list of contents is submitted by the August 30th deadline will be included in the Event App and the slides at the event.*

If you have questions about the County Baskets, contact Lorraine Cummings at lcummings@rcrcnet.org.

- **Sponsors**: Each year, RCRC county supervisors, senior staff, and government partners are joined by our generous sponsors whose financial support ensures that RCRC has the resources needed to provide an engaging conference for our attendees. Our counties play an important role in RCRC's sponsorship program by identifying organizations who may be interested in supporting rural counties. Recommendations for new partners should be sent to Sarah Bolnik at sbolnik@rcrcnet.org. We are pleased to announce that our highest-level sponsor of 2026, the Chairperson's Circle Sponsor, is SitelogIQ for the third consecutive year. Thank you, SitelogIQ!

**Staff Recommendation**

Information only.