
THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 239
Author: Harabedian (D) and Irwin (D), et al.
Amended: 8/29/25 in Senate
Vote: 27 - Urgency

SENATE HOUSING COMMITTEE: 11-0, 6/24/25
AYES: Wahab, Seyarto, Arreguín, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cortese, Durazo,
Gonzalez, Grayson, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla

SENATE GOVERNMENTAL ORG. COMMITTEE: 15-0, 7/8/25
AYES: Padilla, Valladares, Archuleta, Ashby, Blakespear, Cervantes, Dahle,
Hurtado, Jones, Ochoa Bogh, Richardson, Rubio, Smallwood-Cuevas, Wahab,
Weber Pierson

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 8/29/25
AYES: Caballero, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 79-0, 6/2/25 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: State-led County of Los Angeles disaster housing task force

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: This urgency bill requires the state Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal-OES) to convene a County of Los Angeles disaster housing task force, as specified.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Creates the California Emergency Services Act, which establishes the framework for disaster response, emergency management, and governmental powers during emergencies.

- 2) Establishes the Governor's authority to declare a state of emergency and exercise emergency powers. Authorizes the Governor to suspend regulatory statutes during emergencies to facilitate response efforts.
- 3) Grants local governments authority to declare local emergencies and request state assistance.
- 4) Creates Cal-OES to coordinate disaster response and recovery and requires it, in coordination with state agencies and local emergency management agencies, to establish emergency management systems and mutual aid agreements.
- 5) Requires state and local agencies to cooperate in emergency response and recovery efforts.
- 6) Authorizes emergency funding and financial assistance for disaster recovery.
- 7) Establishes, under federal law, the Community Development Block Grant Program – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR), under which HUD provides flexible grants to help cities, counties, and states recover from presidentially declared disasters, particularly in low-income areas. HCD is responsible for administering CDBG-DR funds allocated to the state.

This bill:

- 1) Requires HCD and Cal-OES to jointly convene a state-led County of Los Angeles disaster housing task force to coordinate and streamline efforts between HCD, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Cal-OES, and local governments to rebuild housing in communities impacted by the January 2025 wildfires.
- 2) Requires the task force to include representatives from HCD, FEMA, Cal-OES, the City of Los Angeles, and the County of Los Angeles.
- 3) Requires the task force to appoint a state disaster housing coordinator to accelerate the delivery of resources, including but not limited to funding and technical assistance, to communities impacted by the January 2025 wildfires.
- 4) Requires the task force, on April 1, 2026 and quarterly thereafter until April 1, 2030, to report to the Legislature on the status of rebuilding housing in communities impacted by the January 2025 wildfires.

- 5) Provides that this bill is an urgency statute.

Background

HCD's role. In addition to its role in helping to provide stable, safe homes affordable to a variety of populations, including homeless individuals, HCD is the designated agency responsible for federal CDBG-DR disaster funds. In recent years, HCD has administered more than \$1.5 billion in CDBG-DR funds allocated to California to assist with recovery from various wildfires, floods, landslides, and mudslides across the state.

Cal-OES role. Cal-OES is responsible for mitigating the effects of disasters and coordinating the state's disaster response and recovery, including working with state agencies and local emergency management agencies. Cal-OES also supports local jurisdictions through planning and preparedness activities and training, and is the lead agent in securing federal funds through the FEMA.

Comments

- 1) *Author's statement.* "The devastating Los Angeles fires have left thousands without homes or businesses, turning entire communities to ashes. The long and complex rebuilding process must be accelerated to provide relief to those whose lives have been shattered. AB 239 establishes a state-led disaster housing task force to coordinate recovery efforts, cutting through red tape to ensure homes are rebuilt swiftly and resiliently. This vital legislation will not only restore neighborhoods but also bring hope and stability to those facing unimaginable loss."
- 2) *Los Angeles County wildfires.* Los Angeles County was hit by multiple catastrophic wildfires starting on January 7, 2025, of which the Palisades and Eaton Fires were the most destructive. The Palisades Fire started in the Santa Monica Mountains and caused major destruction in Pacific Palisades (a neighborhood of the City of Los Angeles), Topanga (an unincorporated area of Los Angeles County), and the City of Malibu. This fire burned 23,448 acres, destroying nearly 7,000 structures and damaging an additional 973 structures. The Eaton Fire started in the Eaton Canyon area of the San Gabriel Mountains and was driven by Santa Ana winds into several foothill communities, particularly Altadena (an unincorporated area of Los Angeles County). This fire burned 14,000 acres, destroying more than 9,000 structures and damaging

an additional 1,074 structures. Both fires were brought to full containment by January 31st.¹

- 3) *State response to Palisades and Eaton fires.* On January 7th, Governor Newsom immediately declared a state of emergency and subsequently issued several Executive Orders, including: suspending CEQA review and California Coastal Act permitting for reconstruction of properties substantially damaged or destroyed in the fires; directing state agencies to identify additional permitting requirements that could be suspended or streamlined to accelerate rebuilding; and extending protections against price gouging on building materials and construction.² On January 16th, the Governor issued another Executive Order directing state departments to help local governments develop temporary housing for fire victims; streamlining construction and occupancy of accessory dwelling units; facilitating placement of temporary trailers and other housing on burned properties; suspending fees for mobile home parks; directing Cal-OES to make fairgrounds available to help fire victims; and extending price gouging prohibitions on hotel, motels, and rental housing.³
- 4) *Construction and rebuilding in high risk areas.* California is currently experiencing a serious housing crisis and it is essential to expedite construction – and reconstruction – of critically needed housing units. The state faces a difficult policy question in that it must balance the protection of its residents from wildfires, sea level rise, floods, earthquakes, and other risks, against meeting the need for more housing. While some critics argue that housing should not be built – or rebuilt – in high-risk areas, it would be extremely challenging to relocate the thousands of residents who have lost their homes in disasters such as the Palisades and Eaton Fires.

To address these concerns, the state has taken steps to facilitate safer housing in wildfire areas. The state Board of Forestry and Fire Protection designates high fire hazard severity zones throughout the state; landowners in these areas must follow specified fire prevention practices and meet standards developed by the Board. These practices and standards include maintaining defensible space around structures, reducing flammable materials near and on structures, and meeting specific building standards. The building standards, which took effect in 2008 and are periodically updated, are commonly referred to as the Chapter

¹ CalFire website at [Palisades Fire | CAL FIRE](#) and [Eaton Fire | CAL FIRE](#).

² [Governor Newsom signs executive order to help Los Angeles rebuild faster and stronger | Governor of California](#)

³ [Governor Newsom Issues Executive Order To Fast-Track Temporary Housing For Los Angeles Firestorm Area | California Department of Housing and Community Development](#)

7A standards and apply to all new construction in specified high fire risk zones. Requirements include measures such as fire-retardant-treated wood and shingles; wire mesh coverings on all ventilation openings; exterior glazing on all windows; and non-combustible decking material.

- 5) *Who's in charge?* Pursuant to federal legislation⁴, FEMA was tasked with developing, coordinating, and maintaining a National Disaster Housing Strategy (NHDS) in concert with other federal agencies, state and local governments, tribal governments, and other organizations. The NHDS led to the establishment of the National Disaster Housing Task Force; one of the main goals of the task force is to coordinate with state and tribal governments to develop state-led housing task forces.

While Cal-OES is the state's lead agency in coordinating immediate disaster response and recovery, long-term rebuilding is generally left to regional and local governments. This bill would establish a state-led task force that would be led jointly by Cal-OES and HCD and would include representatives from FEMA, the City of Los Angeles, and the County of Los Angeles. This task force would appoint a disaster housing coordinator, who would be tasked with coordinating and expediting the delivery of funding, technical assistance, and other resources to communities impacted by the Palisades and Eaton Fires. The task force would be required to report to the Legislature on the progress of rebuilding efforts on a quarterly basis between April 2026 and April 2030. Requirements include measures such as fire-retardant-treated wood and shingles; wire mesh coverings on all ventilation openings; exterior glazing on all windows; and non-combustible decking material.

- 6) *Senate Appropriations Amendments.* Author's amendments taken in the Senate Appropriations Committee make the following changes:
- Specifies the coordinator of the Disaster Housing Task Force shall be housed within HCD;
 - Changes the reporting timeline of the task force to the Legislature from quarterly to annually;
 - Adds a sunset provision to the bill, specifying its provisions shall only remain in effect until June 30, 2028.

⁴ The Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006, Title VI of Public Law 109-295, Subtitle E, Section 683.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- HCD estimates costs of approximately \$582,000 annually for two years for 2.0 PY of limited-term staff, including the specified housing coordinator position, for workload to coordinate with local officials, gather data on housing production in affected communities, and to develop and submit reports to the Legislature. (General Fund)
- OES estimates costs in the mid- to high hundreds of thousands of dollars annually for two years for up to 4.0 PY of limited-term staff to support the administrative workload of the task force and assist with the reporting requirements. These costs include a full-time attorney position to advise the task force and oversee compliance. (General Fund)
- Unknown local costs for representatives of both the City and County of Los Angeles to participate on the disaster housing task force. While Legislative Counsel did not key the bill as a state-mandated local program, there could be additional state General Fund costs, subject to a determination by the Commission on State Mandates, if either or both of these local agencies submitted a successful claim for reimbursement of staffing and administrative costs associated with participation on the task force.

SUPPORT: (Verified: 8/29/25)

Apartment Association of Greater Los Angeles
 Associated General Contractors, California Chapters
 California Apartment Association
 California Charter Schools Association
 California-hawaii State Conference of the NAACP
 Cdp Rural Caucus
 City of Santa Monica
 Eaton Fire Survivors Network
 Leadingage California
 Southern California Association of Governments

OPPOSITION: (Verified: 8/29/25)

None received.

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 79-0, 6/2/25

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

Prepared by: Ryan Hardmeyer / HOUSING / (916) 651-4124
9/2/25 17:50:01

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