

CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

AB 239 (Harabedian and Irwin)

As Amended August 29, 2025

2/3 vote. Urgency

SUMMARY

Establishes a State-Led County of Los Angeles Disaster Housing Task Force (Task Force).

Senate Amendments

Amendments taken in the Senate:

- 1) Clarify that the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) will convene the task force, rather than HCD and the Office of Emergency Services (OES) jointly convening the task force.
- 2) Provide that the state disaster housing coordinator will be housed within HCD.
- 3) Change Task Force reporting requirements from quarterly reports to annual reports.
- 4) Repeal the provisions of this bill on June 30, 2028.

COMMENTS

Palisades and Eaton Fires: On January 7, 2025, two devastating wildfires, the Palisades Fire and Eaton Fire, both ignited in Los Angeles County. The Palisades Fire began in the Santa Monica Mountains, rapidly spreading across over 23,000 acres and destroying over 6,800 structures, primarily in the Pacific Palisades community of the City of Los Angeles.¹ The Eaton Fire ignited in Eaton Canyon near Altadena, burning more than 14,000 acres, destroying over 9,400 structures.² Both fires were fully contained by January 31, 2025. Of the more than 16,000 homes and other structures destroyed, the vast majority were located in what is referred to as the wildland-urban interface, or WUI.³ The WUI is where human development meets or mixes with the undeveloped natural environment or wildlands.⁴

Executive Orders: In response to the Palisades and Eaton fires, Governor Newsom issued four executive orders in January and February 2025 intended to help the Los Angeles region rebuild permanent housing quickly. Many of the actions in the executive orders are directly related to expediting the housing approvals process, and removing permitting barriers at the state and local levels. These include requiring HCD to coordinate with local governments to identify and recommend procedures to establish rapid permitting and approval processes to expedite the reconstruction or replacement of residential properties destroyed or damaged by fire. Governor Newsom also committed to collaborating with the Legislature to identify and propose statutory amendments that durably address barriers impeding rapid rebuilding efforts in the areas affected by this emergency.

¹ <https://www.latimes.com/california/live/la-fire-updates-floods-mud-rain-closures-laguna-eaton-palisades>

² IBID.

³ <https://calmatters.org/environment/wildfires/2025/01/la-county-fires-wildland-urban-interface/>

⁴ IBID.

Furthermore, Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass issued an Executive Order on Expedited Community Rebuilding and Recovery on January 13, 2025. This executive order aims to expedite the rebuilding process for affected residents by streamlining local permitting procedures.

Task Force: This bill would establish a state-led County of Los Angeles disaster housing task force, comprising representatives from HCD, OES, FEMA, and representatives from the City and County of Los Angeles. It would require the task force to appoint a state disaster housing coordinator, located in HCD, to accelerate the delivery of resources, including, but not limited to, funding and technical assistance, to communities impacted by the wildfires. The task force would also have to report to the Legislature on the status of rebuilding annually, from April 1, 2026 until June 30, 2028, after which the provisions of this bill will be repealed. This may help to provide transparency and structure to the rebuilding process in the Los Angeles region.

Fire Risk and Response: The devastating Palisades and Eaton Fires were not the first firestorms to destroy homes in California, nor will they be the last. A 2021 analysis by Next 10 and the University of California, Berkeley, found that more than one in 12 Californian homes is located in a high-risk wildfire area, though researchers caution that this is likely an underestimate.⁵ The report also highlighted the growing severity of wildfires, noting that before the 2020 fire season, 15 of California's 20 most destructive wildfires had occurred after 2000, with 10 of those since 2015.⁶ In 2020 alone, Californians endured five of the six largest fires in the state's history, measured by total acreage burned.⁷ Further projections estimate that due to climate change, California's wildfire burn area could increase by 77% by the end of the century.⁸

While Cal OES coordinates immediate disaster response and recovery efforts, long-term rebuilding in California has historically been less coordinated, often left to local and regional governments. This bill would establish a state-led County of Los Angeles Disaster Housing Task Force within HCD to coordinate and accelerate the delivery of resources, such as funding and technical assistance, to wildfire-impacted communities. Beginning April 1, 2026, and annually thereafter, the task force must report to the Legislature on rebuilding progress, with the reporting requirement ending on June 30, 2028. This bill contains an urgency clause so it would become effective immediately after passage.

According to the Author

"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."

Arguments in Support

The San Gabriel Valley Economic Partnership, Regional Chamber of Commerce San Gabriel Valley, Multicultural Business Alliance, and Glendora Chamber of Commerce write together in

⁵ <https://www.next10.org/publications/rebuilding-resilient>

⁶ IBID

⁷ IBID

⁸ IBID

support: "It is critical that we rebuild quickly to ensure that residents are not driven out of their communities due to delays in construction. This has been a significant issue in other communities affected by wildfires, where prolonged reconstruction timelines have displaced residents and disrupted local economies. To avoid a similar problem, we must identify bottlenecks in the process and implement solutions to address them quickly. AB 239's requirement of quarterly reports that outline housing recovery progress, challenges, fund distribution, and future plans will provide accountability and transparency. It will ensure that impediments can be addressed and housing rebuilt quickly. By prioritizing streamlined coordination and leveraging the expertise of state, federal, and local agencies, AB 239 will help ensure that affected communities can rebuild faster and stronger."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Committee on Appropriations:

- 1) General Fund (GF) costs to HCD, likely in the mid-hundreds of thousands of dollars in fiscal year (FY) 2025-26 and ongoing through 2029-30. These costs include additional staff positions to support additional workload to the department, including developing and implementing a data collection and reporting framework and strategy, meeting quarterly reporting requirements. This estimate assumes the housing coordinator position is staffed at HCD. The bill does not specify where the housing coordinator position is housed.
- 2) Cal OES estimates GF costs pressures of \$1.05 million in FY 2025-26 and ongoing through FY 2029-30, for three staff positions to support administrative work and the ongoing quarterly reporting requirements. If Cal OES assumes the housing coordinator position, rather than HCD, Cal OES would require one additional position.
- 3) Although the bill is not keyed as a local mandate by Legislative Counsel, this bill requires the City of Los Angeles and the County of Los Angeles to participate on the task force. These local entities are likely to incur costs as a result of this mandate. These costs are potentially reimbursable by the state, subject to a determination by the Commission on State Mandates.

VOTES:

ASM HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: 11-0-0

YES: Haney, Patterson, Ávila Farías, Caloza, Gallagher, Kalra, Lee, Quirk-Silva, Ta, Wicks, Wilson

ASM EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT: 7-0-0

YES: Ransom, Hadwick, Arambula, Bains, Bennett, Calderon, DeMaio

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 11-0-4

YES: Wicks, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Elhawary, Fong, Mark González, Hart, Pacheco, Pellerin, Solache

ABS, ABST OR NV: Sanchez, Dixon, Ta, Tangipa

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 79-0-0

YES: 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

SENATE FLOOR: 39-0-1

YES: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Grove, Hurtado, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

ABS, ABST OR NV: Reyes

UPDATED

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