

GOVERNOR'S VETO  
AB 239 (Harabedian and Irwin)  
As Enrolled September 10, 2025  
2/3 vote

## SUMMARY

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

- 1) Requires the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to convene a state-led County of Los Angeles disaster housing task force for the purpose of coordinating and streamlining efforts between HCD, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES), and local governments to rebuild housing in communities impacted by the wildfire.
- 2) Requires the housing 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 be housed within HCD, to accelerate the delivery of resources, including, but not limited to, funding and technical assistance, to communities impacted by the wildfire.
- 4) Requires the task force, on April 1, 2026, and annually thereafter, to report to the Legislature on the status of rebuilding housing in communities impacted by the wildfire.
- 5) Sunset the task force's reporting requirement on June 30, 2028.
- 6) Defines "wildfire" as the wildfires that began on January 7, 2025, in the County of Los Angeles.
- 7) Contains an urgency clause.

### **Governor's Veto Message**

This bill would require the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to convene a state-led County of Los Angeles disaster housing task force to coordinate and streamline efforts to rebuild housing in the communities impacted by the 2025 Los Angeles Wildfires.

I appreciate the author's intent to provide a strong and coordinated recovery in Los Angeles County. However, California already has a robust disaster housing coordination structure that delivers on this very goal. Following the Eaton and Palisades Fires, HCD and Cal OES created a Housing Task Force within the Joint Field Office, regularly convening state, federal, and local partners to accelerate delivery of resources and provide technical assistance in rebuilding efforts. That task force has launched resiliency centers, held rebuild workshops, and is actively advancing housing recovery for affected communities. This same framework has guided recovery from countless disasters - from the Camp Fire to the North Complex Fire and beyond - consistently showing that California has the tools and partnerships needed to drive recovery.

This bill would duplicate longstanding work already underway, create additional costs and reporting requirements, and limit the flexibility that has proven essential in disaster response.

My Administration remains fully committed to supporting Los Angeles County's wildfire recovery, and we will continue to build on the progress achieved through the existing task force framework by pursuing efforts that are additive to, rather than duplicative of, this proven structure.

## 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.<sup>1</sup> The Eaton Fire ignited in Eaton Canyon near Altadena, burning more than 14,000 acres, destroying over 9,400 structures.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> The WUI is where human development meets or mixes with the undeveloped natural environment or wildlands.<sup>4</sup>

*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.

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

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

<sup>2</sup> IBID.

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

<sup>4</sup> IBID.

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.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> In 2020 alone, Californians endured five of the six largest fires in the state's history, measured by total acreage burned.<sup>7</sup> Further projections estimate that due to climate change, California's wildfire burn area could increase by 77% by the end of the century.<sup>8</sup>

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 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.

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

<sup>6</sup> IBID

<sup>7</sup> IBID

<sup>8</sup> IBID

## 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

**ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 79-0-1**

**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, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, 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

**ABS, ABST OR NV:** Nguyen

**UPDATED**

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CONSULTANT: Dori Ganetsos / H. & C.D. / (916) 319-2085

FN: 0002187