



COUNTY OF VENTURA

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Second District

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January 28, 2025

County of Ventura Board of Supervisors

Subject: Approval of Sponsorship and Support of Legislative Initiatives at the State Level Related to Investor-Owned Utility Accountability, Public Safety Power Shutoff Transparency and Disaster Assistance

Recommendations:

1. Approve support for, and sponsorship of, legislative solution(s) that provide(s) for direct relief, such as reimbursement, for Investor-Owned Utility (IOU) customers subject to prolonged Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS).
2. Approve support for, and sponsorship of, legislation to mandate transparency, communication, and timely restoration of power by IOUs during PSPS events.
3. Approve support for, and sponsorship of, legislation that establishes a California State Individual Assistance Program (CSIA) to provide disaster recovery assistance for individuals and households affected by non-federally declared disasters, or when a federal disaster declaration is made but FEMA individual assistance thresholds are not met.
4. Approve support for, and sponsorship of, a legislative initiative to include Mountain Fire victims in waiver of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements related to rebuilding residential and commercial property destroyed by fire.

Fiscal Impact: No fiscal impact to the County is anticipated. Advocacy efforts are supported within the existing resources and responsibilities of the County's legislative team and the offices of County Supervisors.

Discussion:

As a County Supervisor, I remain committed to advocating for better service, safety, and emergency preparedness for Ventura County residents. To that end, I ask that our Board support and sponsor the following general proposed legislative efforts at the state level to support this mission by addressing critical issues in investor-owned utility accountability, disaster recovery, and transparency and restoration during public safety power shutoffs.

- Proposed legislation at the state level to require Investor-Owned Utilities (IOUs) to reimburse customers for power outages during Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS), possibly through automatic credits on monthly billing statements. The County of Ventura will thereby act as sponsor of any legislative initiative that would require IOUs to reimburse customers for power outages during Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS), thereby protecting consumers and encouraging

accountability for utility companies during extreme weather events that necessitate power outages. The current process has failed customers.

- Proposed legislation at the state level to require IOUs in California to provide increased transparency and responsiveness regarding Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS), to consider and include such things as the publication of weather conditions, notification of public safety agencies regarding critical infrastructure, and real-time communication with customers.
- Support proposed legislation at the state level to establish the California State Individual Assistance Program (CSIA). This program would provide financial assistance to disaster victims in incidents that do not qualify for federal disaster relief under the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) program, including cases where a federal disaster declaration is made but FEMA individual assistance thresholds are not met.

The above proposed legislative efforts, if passed, would enhance transparency and build public trust during PSPS events. They prioritize public safety and rapid response to emergencies.

Finally, I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting a legislative effort to include Mountain Fire victims in waiver of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements related to rebuilding residential and commercial property destroyed by fire. Such waiver has already been afforded to victims of the Palisades and Eaton Fires in Los Angeles County and would bring some administrative relief to Mountain Fire victims in our County that have suffered similar losses and face similar rebuilding challenges.

The proposed advocacy aligns with the County's strategic goals of promoting public safety, improving emergency response, and ensuring equitable access to disaster recovery resources.

Strategic Plan – Focus Area: These actions support the County's focus on Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, reinforcing Ventura County's commitment to protecting residents and strengthening community resilience.

This letter has been reviewed by the County Executive Office, the Auditor-Controller's Office, and County Counsel. If you have any questions regarding this item, please contact me at SupervisorGorell@ventura.org.

Sincerely,



Jeff Gorell, Supervisor, Second District, Vice Chair of the Board of Supervisors