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CSAC Urges Lawmakers to Reject Wildfire Liability Utility Bailout

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CSAC has joined a broad coalition of local governments, wildfire survivors, insurers and consumer advocates in urging legislative leaders to [reject any proposal](#) that shifts the cost of utility-caused wildfires away from investor-owned utilities and onto taxpayers, local governments and wildfire survivors.

In [a joint letter](#) sent Tuesday to Senate President pro Tempore Monique Limón, Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas and members of the Legislature, the coalition warns that Californians would not avoid the costs of utility-caused wildfires under such proposals — they would simply receive the bill in a different form through higher taxes, higher insurance premiums, reduced public services or diminished compensation for wildfire losses.

The coalition argues that weakening utility liability would also undermine one of California's strongest incentives for wildfire prevention. Existing liability standards encourage utilities to invest in system hardening, vegetation management, grid modernization and other safety improvements. Reducing financial accountability, the letter says, sends the wrong signal while shifting billions of dollars in costs away from utility shareholders and onto California communities.

For counties, the stakes are especially high. Local governments are responsible for rebuilding critical public infrastructure after disasters, including roads, bridges, water systems, emergency facilities and other public assets. If utilities are no longer fully responsible for damage caused by their equipment, counties could be left without a viable funding source to rebuild essential infrastructure, delaying recovery and placing additional pressure on local budgets and taxpayers.

Rather than shifting costs, the coalition urges lawmakers to focus on policies that reduce wildfire risk, including stronger statewide coordination, accelerated fuels reduction, home hardening, improved risk assessment tools and other mitigation strategies that enhance community resilience while maintaining utility accountability.

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