



June 20, 2019

Senator Elect Brian Dahle
California State Senate, District 1
State Capitol, Suite #2054,
Sacramento, CA 95814

Assembly Member Frank Bigelow
California State Assembly, District 5
State Capitol, Suite #4158,
Sacramento, CA 94249

Assembly Member Kevin Kiley
California State Assembly, District 6
State Capitol, Suite #5126,
Sacramento, CA 94249

Re: Growing crisis related to the availability and affordability of adequate Fire Insurance for homeowners and business owners

Senator Elect Dahle, Assembly Member Bigelow & Assembly Member Kiley;

We write to express our concern over the availability and affordability of Fire Insurance for homeowners in El Dorado County (EDC). This issue has become a crisis in our community and continues to affect more residents every day that passes. In an effort to research solutions and identify potential collaborative partners, the EDC Democratic Party has made contact with other California communities facing the same crisis. Additionally, we have been in contact with Governor Newsom and Insurance Commissioner Lara. In the process of our outreach and research, we found that there have been recent state-level task force reports, commissions and legislative hearings where our community's voice is notably absent on the record.

We fully understand that much work goes on behind the scenes. That said, this issue has the potential to severely harm our community, therefore, we urge you, as our state legislature representatives, to lead a unified, , transparent, and collaborative action to ensure that any policy considerations at the state level will be community driven with local government input.

Enclosed you will find correspondence and information that the EDC Democratic Party has submitted to the EDC Board of Supervisors (BOS). There are three main takeaways that our representatives should push for at the state level:

1. Access to fire insurance for homeowners in fire risk areas is, in fact, a crisis, not simply anecdotal.

The absence of a centralized consumer access tracking system must be addressed as soon as possible. Action is needed to develop a centralized means of measuring consumer access to protective homeowners insurance coverage that aggregates an insurer's willingness to offer coverage in a given area, which the Senate Committee on Insurance Update on Wildfire and Homeowners Insurance: Access and Affordability Report highlighted as a current gap. This is despite the passage of SB 824 (Lara) in 2018 that authorizes the Department to conduct a biennial data call on insurers' losses related to fires and wildfires but who's first round of data will not be due until 2020. Meanwhile, we see reports of residents in our community frantically seeking guidance on how to navigate the insurance market from neighbors via online community forums. Coordinated outreach from the appropriate agencies is needed ASAP.

2. Increased transparency and uniform risk modeling standards need to be applied across the Insurance industry that takes into consideration:

- a. individual homeowner fire mitigation efforts (i.e. vegetation management and home hardening),
- b. local certification programs (i.e. Boulder Colorado's Wildfire Partners Program, Fire Wise, etc.)
- c. neighborhood mitigation programs (i.e. Firewise Communities, etc), and
- d. regional fire mitigation activities at the local and state levels (i.e. CalFIRE firebreak projects, increased County hazardous vegetation inspections, etc.).

3. Risk and full cost of disasters, can not be left on the backs of the most vulnerable residents of our state. While it is undisputed that California's some 3.6 million homes located within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) are at greater risk of the threat of wildfire; how we manage and absorb those risks remains at debate. We urge the Governor's office, legislature and the Department of Insurance to ensure that County and local governments are a part of the conversation on how to best manage the risks and costs associated with catastrophic events that does not leave California residents at financial jeopardy or ruin.

Rural communities with a high wildfire risk stand to bear serious costs associated with any crisis recovery and need to be at the table to help avert exacerbated recovery costs compounded by a lack of insurance coverage. To ensure that EDC representatives and other impacted counties across your districts are included as collaborative members in stakeholder discussions at the state level, we strongly urge you to take action, formally expressing concern over this issue in writing to appropriate state government leaders and colleagues in the state legislature.

It has been very alarming to see that most of our residents do not know where or how to seek out accurate and non-partial information on how to navigate the homeowners insurance market in what has become an extremely complex and rapidly changing circumstance. Community Fire Safe Councils, online community forums, and social media chat pages are being inundated with daily frantic pleas for help from EDC residents, and their only proactive resource has been from local insurance brokers and agents, who are doing their best to help, but also represent their own business interest first. We must do better to provide a forum where input from residents is sought, and in turn, our state legislature representatives strongly advocate our needs, in writing so there is no question as to what actions are being taken. We urge our state legislature representatives in California Senate District 1 and Assembly Districts 5 & 6 to work with our local governments and community organizations to coordinate such outreach and to substantively address this issue

This issue is non-partisan and addressing this challenge will require a unified voice from our community. Let's put our heads together and push for community-led-solutions. The only acceptable political position on this issue is simple: **we need urgent, collaborative, transparent action that results in our residents and businesses having access to affordable and protective fire insurance.**

We stand ready to assist, as active and collaborative community stakeholders. Should you have any questions or wish to discuss further, you may contact Lauren Hernandez at 530-919-5289 or via email at HLauren725@gmail.com.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.



Joshua Elder
Chair
El Dorado County Democratic Party



Lauren Hernandez
Chair
Policy, Issues and Resolutions Committee
El Dorado County Democratic Party

Number of Enclosures: 5

Cc: Governor Gavin Newsom
Lt. Governor Eleni Kounalakis
Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara
Senator Susan Rubio, Chair, Committee on Insurance
Assembly Member Tom Daly, Chair, Committee on Insurance
California Legislative Rural Caucus
El Dorado County Board of Supervisors

Reply:
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