January 9, 2018

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr.
Governor, State of California
State Capitol, First Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Mark Ghilarducci
Director, Office of Emergency Services
3650 Schriever Ave.
Mather, CA 95655

VIA EMAIL AND MAIL
RE: State Budget and Policy Requests for Fire Impacted Counties

Dear Governor Brown and Director Ghilarducci,

The Counties of Mendocino, Napa, Sonoma, and Lake, and their incorporated cities, suffered tremendous loss on a scale that continues to be nearly incomprehensible. We appreciate the hard work and dedication you and your offices have shown to our jurisdictions in response to those fire events with your time and support. In particular, we thank you for the Fire Recovery Summit and Roundtable that was convened on December 1st. This letter is a requested follow-up to that meeting.

In Sonoma County, during the depths of a housing crisis, five percent of the housing stock has been lost. Watersheds will be impacted, infrastructure must be rebuilt, and the real fabric of community must be re-sewn. This will put tremendous strain on the County and its cities that will deliver critical, durable, ongoing and unfaltering public assistance to thousands of victims for the near future.

In Napa County, 20% of the acreage damaged by fire and 5.35% of the unincorporated housing stock was lost. Watersheds adjacent to municipal water supplies are severely impacted and will require vigilant oversight and inspection to ensure the safety of the drinking water supply. In addition, critical infrastructure was damaged because of the fire and roadway surfaces are suffering because of fire cleanup and recovery.

In Mendocino County, 36,000 acres were burnt, homes were lost, agricultural land was damaged and watersheds continue to be threatened. However, this does not touch on the loss of lives. The devastation of this event will live on for decades.

In Lake County, with three consecutive seasons of massive wildfires, over five percent of existing housing stock has been lost and more than 22% of the total land mass has burned. Recovery is ongoing and efforts will be long-term while the ability of local government to deliver core serves has been severely impacted.

While we recognize your prudence and caution in State expenditures – which has put the State back on stable fiscal footing – we are writing to ask that the adopted 2018-19 State Budget include several

appropriations to assist our counties and constituent cities – as well as other recently fire-ravaged local governments – in the most thoughtful, comprehensive and sustainable way possible.

Our specific requests are attached. We are also attaching public policy changes that we strongly believe merit consideration by you and the Legislature in 2018.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We would like to meet with you and your staff soon to discuss ways that state and local government can work together to help our communities not only rebuild but also thrive going forward.

Sincerely,

Lake County Board of Supervisors

Jim Steele, Chair

Mendocino County Board of Supervisors

Dan Hamburg, Chair

Napa County Board of Supervisors

Brad Wagenknecht, Chair

Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

James Gore, Chair

Attachments

cc: Governor Jerry Brown
Nancy McFadden, Chief of Staff to Governor Brown
Michael Cohen, Director of Finance
Keely Bosler, Cabinet Secretary, Governor's Office
Diane Cummins, Special Advisor, Department of Finance
State Legislative Delegations and Staff
Matt Cate, California State Association of Counties
Paul Smith, Rural County Representatives of California

Fiscal Fire-Related Legislative Requests

Proposal
Backfill the loss of property taxes (to the 2017 assessment level prior to fires), transient occupancy taxes, and sales taxes.
Backfill the amount that lost homes would have contributed in property taxes to the debt service of local schools and districts at their 2017 assessed values.
Waive local cost share of debris clean up.
Prioritize SB 2 funds currently retained by the California Department of Housing and Community Development for affordable housing investments in fire-impacted counties and cities.
Designate Cap and Trade monies for environmental restoration activities and low energy / net-zero energy building subsidies in fire-impacted counties and cities.
Expedite payments for county-provided services, whenever possible using estimates (and allowing for eventual true ups) rather than exact costs to help address cash flow problems, e.g. in the areas of mental health, social services, etc.
Make bond funding available to fire impacted local governments for watershed remediation, species protection and drinking water supply projects.
Fund the development of long-term (5-10 year) comprehensive regional recovery plans that focus on fire prevention, sustainability and resiliency.
Provide funding to incentivize rebuilding that meets fire resistant standards.
Fund the work of volunteers / non-governmental organizations.
Waive mandated local matches related to recovery and / or resiliency.
Provide funding for small water districts that must rebuild affected infrastructure.
Fund watershed protection.
Fund road repair.
Provide funding for fire safe private bridges, road retrofitting/improvements to provide critical emergency exit routes.
Appropriate any available State Responsbility Area funding to fire-ravaged areas.
Provide funding for the removal of burned trees that serve not only as a hazard in creek beds and present future fire hazards but are also a hindrance to recovery and future economic growth of fire-ravaged communities given the massive destruction visible from many roadways and other public areas.

Policy Fire-Related Legislative Requests

Proposal
Extend the currently established burn zone California Environmental Quality Act exemptions to all fire impacted counties until a specific period of time or goals is met (i.e. 7 years, until x number of units have been built, or 200% of Regional Housing Needs Assesment).
Provide administrative and legislative relief to expedite local projects typically involving State Fish & Game, Water Board, etc.
Fast track expansion of county landfills.
Allow local governments to use a portion of the debris insurance collection for local recovery efforts, subject to state rules for how the funds are to be used.
Facilitate vocational training programs for youth and unemployed adults to work in the various trades and assist in meeting increased construction demand.
Legislate that public health emergency declaration renewals may be every 30 days rather than 14 days.
Streamline / fast track public assistance payments for various county-run programs.
Provide additional assistance in communicating with the federal government especially for areas that have suffered multiple disasters over the last several years.
Create a state ombudsperson to assist local governments and individuals with disaster and recovery questions and needs.
Provide increased technical assistance with disaster preparedness (including hazard mitigation), response, and recovery training.
Provide technical assistance with community planning, including innovative rebuilding ideas.
Change state law on rolling brown outs of power during high wind events.
Ease housing element regulations for fire impacted jurisdictions as currently a certified housing element is required for Community Development Block Grants.
Amend Government Code 65584.01 (G) to read, "The loss of units during a Governor declared emergency that have not been rebuilt or replaced at the time of the data request."
Amend the Mobile Home Park Act so that when two or more spaces are being held out for rent or lease it does not automatically convert that property into a mobile home park.
Work with California Office of Emergency Services to develop a list serve / share point to provide up to the minute information to local governments during disasters.
Coordinate with the University of California Cooperative Extension and Cal Fire to conduct an assessment and create recommendations for fire safe vegetation management on private and public land, and provide competitive grants for counties to implement those recommendations.
Make Community Conservation Corps available to implement defensible space standards.
Provide specific mandated standards for emergency alert systems statewide (along with the funding necessary) to implement those standards.
Establish mandatory requirement that private residential garage doors remain operational at an Americans with Disabilities Act standard during a loss of power.
Change state law mandating insurance companies to provide housing assistance payments for a minimum of 3 years.
Amend state law on increasing the standards and requirements for maintaining fire prevention measures in state parks.
Secure state support of request to Federal Emergency Management Act that fire victims who have not rebuilt within 2 years of insurance coverage receive Federal Emergency Management housing assistance to cover the gap.