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WILDFIRE VICTIMS *FIRST*

Housing Advocates and Labor Leaders Urge State Leaders to Push Forward on Wildfire Recovery Reforms That Help All Californians

More than 275 non-profits, fire safe councils and community organizations have joined Wildfire Victims First in support of urgent action to reform recovery

California's current wildfire recovery system prioritizes hedge funds, insurance companies and trial lawyers over victims while raising costs on hardworking Californians

SACRAMENTO, CA – State housing and labor leaders today renewed their call for legislators to push forward reforms to the state's broken wildfire recovery system before the legislature adjourns in August. There are now more than 275 organizations who are calling for swift action by the legislature to ensure wildfire victims get paid quickly – before hedge funds and other financial middle men who California's recovery system currently favors – and to ensure that California electricity customers and middle- and lower-income homeowners aren't forced to pad the profits of these same hedge funds, insurance companies and trial attorneys.

"We were encouraged to read press reports outlining Governor Newsom's wildfire aid reform efforts. Housing providers and home builders have seen firsthand how hard and expensive it is for wildfire victims to rebuild. The devastating costs of catastrophic wildfires have driven up insurance costs, slowed new housing production, and made housing more expensive for all Californians. We strongly believe that pairing practical reforms that protect victims and ratepayers from hedge funds and others profiting from fires, increased prevention measures and greater utility accountability measures is the right path forward for state leaders," **said Dan Dunmoyer, President and CEO of the California Building Industry Association.**

"IBEW members work tirelessly to keep the lights on for California families and too frequently see firsthand how communities are left in the ashes to rebuild on their own. The current system does not account for the growing risks of climate change and is being financially exploited. Change is needed to uplift survivors, and the reports of progress being made on framework is a step in the right direction," **said Robert Dean, Business Manager IBEW 1245.**

"State leaders should act urgently to address our wildfire crisis. California is already one of the most expensive states to live and do business in, and our broken wildfire recovery system is making our affordability crisis worse. It's completely unsustainable. Anyone who pays a utility bill or has to purchase fire insurance has paid the price for this broken system. Experts estimate that if state leaders act, customers would receive up to \$200 in utility bill credits. For most Californians, that would be a real boost and can help with some of the pressure they feel at the end of each month. If state leaders don't act, Californians will continue to feel the pain of

everyday costs," said Lance Hastings President & CEO of the California Manufacturers & Technology Association (CMTA).

"We were pleased to see the reports outlining wildfire recovery action. Our state's broken wildfire recovery system is making housing and rent more expensive by rewarding inefficiency and those who drive costs up by profiting from wildfires instead of rebuilding communities. Housing providers and renters deserve a wildfire recovery system that prioritizes rebuilding communities without making California's housing crisis worse," said Tom Bannon, President & CEO of the California Apartment Association"

Wildfire Victims First launched following the independent California Earthquake Authority report in April this year. The report warned that the state's wildfire recovery system is too slow, too expensive, and too often puts victims last.

The governmental report also highlighted how payouts to financial middlemen — like trial attorneys, hedge funds, and insurance companies — are often paid out before wildfire victims receive a single dollar for rebuilding. Shockingly, trial attorneys can take up to 40% of wildfire victims' settlement award, while victims are often forced to wait years to receive a single dollar.

The Wildfire Victims First coalition now includes more than 275 social justice, community, labor, small business, chambers of commerce, fire safe councils, and local governments from every region of California. The coalition is calling on the Legislature to enact a comprehensive Wildfire Victims First framework that:

- Protects people from wildfires
- Makes insurance available and affordable
- Pays victims first, fast, and fairly

With the legislative session ending in August, the coalition is urging lawmakers to act on the framework before critical deadlines pass.

To learn more about the Wildfire Victims First coalition, visit wildfirevictimsfirst.com/coalition.

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