HART RESEARCH

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Geoff Garin, Hart Research Associates

DATE: August 10, 2026

RE: California Voters Oppose Limiting the Right of Wildfire Victims to Recover Damages from Utility Companies

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In our recently completed survey with a representative statewide cross section of 800 California voters, conducted August 1-4, we asked respondents whether they would favor or oppose a proposal that would limit the legal rights of wildfire survivors to recover monetary damages from a utility company that caused the wildfire. Half the respondents were told in addition that supporters say this "is necessary to stabilize the finances of the utility industry and keep utility rates from going up."

The survey results show that a large majority of voters oppose this proposal, <u>even when they are told it is necessary to stabilize utility industry finances and prevent utility rate increases</u>. Voters with strong views on the subject oppose the proposal by lopsided margins.

Among voters who heard the rationale for the proposal, 37% favor it and 63% oppose it. Only 6% strongly favor the proposal, while 35% strongly oppose it.

The results are even more negative for the half sample that heard the proposal without also hearing the supporters' rationale, as would be the case for many voters in the real world. When simply asked about limiting the legal rights of wildfire survivors to recover monetary damages from a utility company that caused the damage, 29% favor it and 71% oppose it, including 42% who are strongly opposed.

Opposition to the proposal cuts across party lines. In combining responses to the two versions of the question, 68% of Democrats oppose the proposal, 71% of independents oppose it, and 63% of Republicans oppose it. The proposal is rejected by large majorities of both Becerra supporters (70% oppose, including 37% strongly oppose) and Hilton supporters (62% oppose, 43% strongly oppose). Large majorities of Democrats, independents, and Republicans oppose the proposal even with the promise of keeping utility rates from going up.

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The proposal is opposed by over 60% of voters in every region of the state, in every age group, and across genders, ethnicity, and income levels, based on the combined responses to the two versions. Opposition is especially high among voters under age 50 (74% oppose) and voters with a post-graduate degree (72% oppose). Sixty-six percent of home owners are opposed to the proposal, as are 68% of renters.

These results are consistent with our findings over many years and in many different situations that Americans value their legal rights, including their right to recover damages, and dislike having those rights limited or taken away – especially if it allows corporations to evade responsibility for the harms they cause.