



January 30, 2019

1100 K Street
Suite 101
Sacramento
California
95814

Telephone
916.327.7500

Facsimile
916.441.5507

Honorable Phillip Ting
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Holly Mitchell
Chair, Senate Budget & Fiscal Committee
State Capitol, Room 5080
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: Assembly Bill 72 (Committee on Budget) – Budget Act of 2018.
Assembly Bill 73 (Committee on Budget) – State emergencies: Disaster Response-
Emergency Operations Account.**

Dear Assembly Member Ting and Senator Mitchell:

The 2017 wildfire season brought devastation to communities throughout California. Gubernatorial declared state of emergencies were issued for record-breaking fires in October and December for 13 counties in both southern and northern California. Then, while California was still recovering, it was struck with the deadliest and most destructive wildfire in our State's history – the Camp Fire – which took 85 lives, burned 153,336 acres and destroyed 18,804 structures. All disasters start and end in our local communities. Local governments must have access to the fiscal assistance necessary to not only tackle rebuilding their communities but also to ensure that they have a system in place to warn their constituents. It is for these reasons that the California State Association of Counties (CSAC), which represents all 58 counties, supports Assembly Bills 72 and 73, specifically the provisions that: (1) extend the sunset date of the California Disaster Assistance Act, which provides counties with desperately needed funding; (2) appropriate \$31.3 million to backfill property tax losses incurred as a result of the wildfires; (3) provide funding to begin upgrades to California's 9-1-1 emergency system; and (4) provide \$50 million for emergency preparedness, with \$30 million for a statewide campaign and \$20 million for local grants.

I. The California Disaster Assistance Act

The California Disaster Assistance Act (Act) authorizes the Director of the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) to administer a disaster assistance program that provides financial assistance from the State for costs incurred by local governments as a result of a disaster. Unfortunately, the Act expired on January 1, 2019, and the State no longer has the authority to reimburse counties for these costs. At a time when California is recovering from the worst wildfire in its history, we cannot emphasize enough the importance of extending this sunset so that our communities can continue to rebuild. CSAC supports the provision of Assembly Bill 73 that would reinstate the State's authority to reimburse counties.

II. Property Tax Backfill

The immediate response to natural disasters that have occurred in the past two years is now being followed by recovery efforts. These efforts will continue for years, as these ravaged areas work to rebuild their communities. And, county revenue depletion will undoubtedly continue for several years from the damaged and/or destroyed properties. CSAC supports the

appropriation, in AB 72, of \$31.3 million General Fund to backfill wildfire-related property tax revenue losses for local governments, as well as a longer term backfill for Butte and Lake Counties.

III. Funding and Modernization of 9-1-1

In an emergency, nothing is more critical than for residents to be able to quickly connect with public safety agencies for assistance. Yet, in California we are still counting on an antiquated system prone to outages during disasters. In 2017, more than 28 million calls were placed to 9-1-1 representing approximately 77,000 calls per day, an increase of nearly 30 percent since 2010. The current system is overtaxed and has an average of 15 network outages a month which equates to 255 hours a month that 9-1-1 was not working. CSAC supports the \$10 million appropriation in AB 72, as it is an important first step in modernizing California's 9-1-1 system. CSAC looks forward to working with the Legislature and the Administration to also modernize California's outdated 9-1-1 funding formula, which is crucial to protecting our emergency call system while providing for the future NextGen 9-1-1.

IV. Emergency Preparedness

During each of the natural disasters in California there have been numerous stories about people who did not survive because they did not have adequate notice and did not know what escape route to take. In the event of an emergency, the strategies and systems used become critical, and can and do save lives. While CSAC supports providing \$50 million for emergency preparedness outreach, which will certainly help to ensure resiliency in our communities, CSAC believes that a warning system is also paramount to saving lives during an emergency. CSAC looks forward to working with the Legislature and the Administration to ensure that all counties have adequate warning systems in place.

Should you have any questions and/or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Darby Kernan, Deputy Executive Director, Legislative Services, at (916) 284-9872 or dkernan@counties.org.

Respectfully,



Darby Kernan
Deputy Executive Director, Legislative Services

cc: Members, California State Senate
Members, California State Assembly
Consultants, Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review
Consultants, Assembly Committee on Budget