



RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES
OF CALIFORNIA

March 14, 2023

The Honorable Jim Patterson
Member, California State Assembly
1021 O Street, Room 4310
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Assembly Bill 704 – SUPPORT
As Introduced February 13, 2023**

Dear Assembly Member Patterson:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), we support your Assembly Bill 704, regarding post-wildfire home rebuilding. RCRC is an association of forty rural California counties and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from each of those member counties.

RCRC member counties contain much of California's forested lands and have suffered the vast majority of the state's most catastrophic wildfire events in the last decade. Many of these fires also occurred in some of the most socioeconomically disadvantaged areas of the state where economic resources to mitigate the impacts of such disasters and aid residents with recovery are extremely limited.

The California Energy Commission (CEC) requires all new residential buildings built after January 1, 2020 to be equipped with solar photovoltaic systems. Since post-fire rebuilding is considered "new construction" and must adhere to the current building standards at the time of rebuilding, this new mandate will add significant cost to the price of rebuilding for homeowners who already lack the resources to rebuild their homes.

In 2019, Assembly Bill 178 (Chapter 259, 2019) provided similar relief for those whose homes were damaged or destroyed in the Camp Fire (Butte County) and Tubbs Fire; however, that relief expired on January 1, 2023 and did not extend to homes destroyed during an emergency proclaimed by the Governor after January 1, 2020. Unfortunately, many of the homes destroyed by the Camp Fire have still not yet been rebuilt because of funding and construction delays. By re-codifying the now-expired relief, AB 704 lets those residents who have not yet been able to rebuild enjoy the relief they believed would be available to them.

1215 K Street, Suite 1650, Sacramento, CA 95814 | www.rcrcnet.org | 916.447.4806 | Fax: 916.448.3154

ALPINE · AMADOR · BUTTE · CALAVERAS · COLUSA · DEL NORTE · EL DORADO · GLENN · HUMBOLDT · IMPERIAL · INYO · KINGS · LAKE · LASSEN
MADERA · MARIPOSA · MENDOCINO · MERCED · MODOC · MONO · MONTEREY · NAPA · NEVADA · PLACER · PLUMAS · SAN BENITO · SAN LUIS OBISPO
SANTA BARBARA · SHASTA · SIERRA · SISKIYOU · SOLANO · SONOMA · SUTTER · TEHAMA · TRINITY · TULARE · TUOLUMNE · YOLO · YUBA

The Honorable Jim Patterson
Assembly Bill 704
March 14, 2023
Page 2

AB 704 also affords similar relief to homes that were destroyed in the brutal 2020 and 2021 fire seasons, thereby providing much-needed relief for the repair, restoration, or replacement of residential structures damaged or destroyed in a disaster in an area for which the Governor declared a state of emergency.

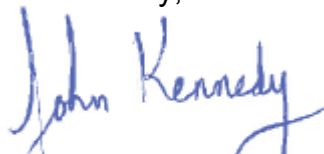
As these communities begin rebuilding, many insured homeowners are finding themselves underinsured. Rebuilding is even more difficult for uninsured homeowners. This is becoming an even larger problem because many insurers are canceling policies for those who live in high-fire risk areas and homeowners are finding that they cannot afford replacement policies.

While it is admittedly less expensive to install solar panels on a newly-constructed home, even those reduced costs add up and make rebuilding harder and more expensive for those who have already lost everything and may not have the resources necessary to rebuild the life they once had. Recent changes to the CPUC's solar net metering program will further extend the payback period for these types of investments.

Contrary to the assertions of some interest groups, compliance with the CEC solar mandate will do NOTHING to increase energy reliability or resiliency for those who are rebuilding their homes and who live in areas subject to frequent energy outages. As thousands of Californians learned during the state's widespread Public Safety Power Shutoff events, merely having solar panels on one's home will not keep the lights on when there is a power outage. In order to achieve the resiliency benefits those groups claim the CEC mandate provides, homeowners will also have to install even more expensive energy storage systems that can add an extra \$10,000-\$20,000 to the cost of rebuilding.

For the above reasons, RCRC supports your AB 704. If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at jkennedy@rcrcnet.org.

Sincerely,



JOHN KENNEDY
Policy Advocate

cc: The Honorable Luz Rivas, Chair, Assembly Natural Resources Committee
Members of the Assembly Natural Resources Committee
Elizabeth MacMillan, Consultant, Assembly Natural Resources Committee
Casey Dunn, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus