

An Open Letter to Governor Newsom and Treasurer Ma from a Community Devastated by Wildfires

Dear Governor Newsom and Treasurer Ma:

In one night in October 2017, the City of Santa Rosa lost five percent of its housing stock to the Tubbs Fire. By the end of that week, Sonoma County had lost 5,300 homes to the Sonoma Complex wildfires. Less than a year later, the Camp Fire in Butte County took out 11,000 homes, nearly leveling the entire town of Paradise.

New Disaster Recovery Housing Funding

We thank Congress for working diligently on behalf of Sonoma County and the other areas devastated by the 2017-2018 wildfires. This includes the effort to insert an additional \$100 Million allocation of Low Income Housing Tax Credits into the federal budget approved on December 19, 2019. As you know, \$100 Million in tax credits over 10 years equates to about \$1 Billion for affordable housing funding ("Housing Funding"). Congressman Thompson's and Congress' clear legislative intent for this Housing Funding was to make a desperately-needed investment in affordable housing for those communities suffering most from a significant loss of homes to wildfires, and the ripple effects of those losses.

The Camp and Tubbs fires rank as the two most destructive wildfires in California state history, and both communities are still reeling from economic and emotional trauma. And based on the initially-published regulations for allocation of the Housing Funding, our community feared that we could have limited access — perhaps even no practical access — to the new funding.

The Proposed Regulations

On January 22, the California Tax Credit Allocation Committee (TCAC) published proposed regulations for the allocation of the Housing Funding that TCAC Executive Director Judith Blackwell indicated would be finalized by mid-February. The regulations were released less than a month after the ink dried on the new law, and were developed without any significant community input. As initially proposed, the regulations disfavor the communities that need them most.

We thank Congressman Thompson and Senator McGuire for their efforts to work with the Governor's the Treasurer's office to revisit these regulations. We are heartened to learn of the positive response from their respective offices and the Treasurer's intent to protect our community. This issue is critical to the recovery and resiliency of our county. And so we write today to educate the public on this important issue and to voice our support for the Treasurer's movement towards a more equitable distribution in favor of the most wild-fire impacted parts of our state.

Disaster experts take the position that a true "disaster" is not a fire, flood, or hurricane; rather, it's a failed response to the natural event. We appreciate your help, Governor Newsom and Treasurer Ma, in preventing a true disaster and protecting the communities hurt most by the 2017-2018 wildfires. We thank you in advance for prevailing upon TCAC to write regulations that comply not just with the letter of, but with the spirit of the Taxpayer Certainty and Disaster Tax Relief Act of 2019.

We look forward to regulations that ensure that the Housing Funding is allocated in a deliberately equitable process: one that considers the relative impact to the communities and their housing stock and works in coordination with the impacted local governments. Under the initially proposed regulations, it was entirely possible that the Counties of Los Angeles, Orange, and San Diego, could be awarded the majority of the Housing Funding and that the devastated Counties of Sonoma and Butte could be left with insignificant funds for affordable housing. Those early regulations also placed all of the control for allocation to specific housing development projects in Sacramento, rather than allowing the localities to prioritize projects in a way that is best for their communities' recovery and resilience.

As initially published, the proposed regulations were inconsistent with the Congressional intent for this disaster-specific Housing Funding. We are grateful to learn that your respective Offices have undertaken

to seriously reconsider and revise the regulations in a way that ensures that the communities most impacted by the 2017-2018 wildfires have the greatest access to the Housing Funding and that they are given local control over their use.

Sonoma County Needs This Housing Funding

The 2017 fire marked the end of more than a half-century of uninterrupted population gains in Sonoma County. Our population has consistently dwindled since the fires. Our net migration out in 2018 was the largest of any county in the state. We know from local reporting, and conversations with our constituents, friends and family, that many folks are on the bubble of the decision to stay or go. This outflow causes legitimate concern about the vitality of our county.

We are doing all we can here in Sonoma County. Both the County, and the City of Santa Rosa, our County seat, quickly enacted innovative policies to lower costs and barriers to housing development. The County and City collaborated to create a first-of-its-kind joint powers authority, the Renewal Enterprise District, to help accelerate transit-oriented, in-fill development. Governor Newsom, in your 2019 State of the State address, you recognized our work, proclaiming that, "If we want a California for All, we have to build housing for all...I want to support local governments that do what's right, like Anaheim and Santa Rosa." We need that support now.

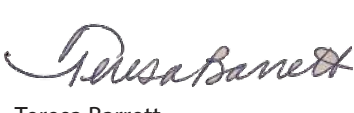
As leaders in Sonoma County, we represent teachers, nurses, firefighters, small business owners, nonprofit service providers, and the workforce that makes up the heart and soul of our celebrated wine and restaurant industries. We represent families who love Sonoma County, who want to stay here, and want their kids to be able to afford to make their homes here.

We thank you in advance for believing in us and investing in our future, by ensuring that we have fair and equitable access to and control over the disaster Housing Funding.

With hope, gratitude and respect,



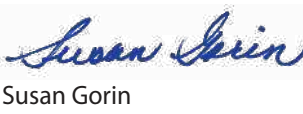
James Gore
Sonoma County Supervisor,
Fourth District



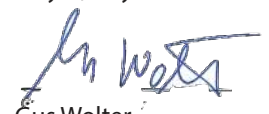
Teresa Barrett
Mayor, City of Petaluma



Chris Coursey
Fmr. Mayor, City of Santa Rosa



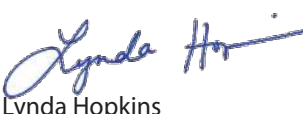
Susan Gorin
Sonoma County Supervisor,
First District



Gus Wolter
Mayor, City of Cloverdale



Herman J. Hernandez
President, Los Cien Sonoma
County



Lynda Hopkins
Sonoma County Supervisor,
Fifth District



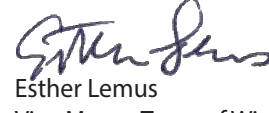
Evelyn Mitchell
Vice Mayor, City of Healdsburg



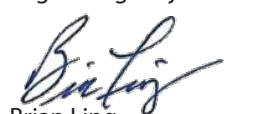
Leticia Romero
President, North Bay
Organizing Project



David Rabbitt
Sonoma County Supervisor,
Second District




Esther Lemus
Vice Mayor, Town of Windsor



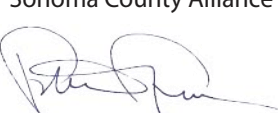
Brian Ling
CEO/Executive Director,
Sonoma County Alliance



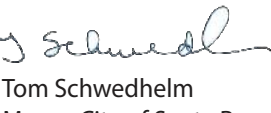
Shirlee Zane
Sonoma County Supervisor,
Third District



Elece Hempel
Board Chair, Petaluma Health
Care District



Peter Rumble
CEO, Santa Rosa Metro
Chamber



Tom Schwedhelm
Mayor, City of Santa Rosa



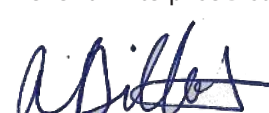
Michelle Whitman
Executive Director,
Renewal Enterprise District



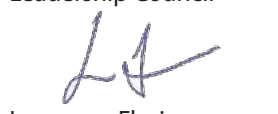
Cynthia Murray
President/CEO, North Bay
Leadership Council



Ernesto Olivares
Councilmember, City of
Santa Rosa



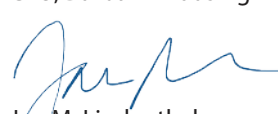
Angie Dillon-Shore
Executive Director,
First 5 Sonoma County



Lawrence Florin
CEO, Burbank Housing



Jack Tibbetts
Councilmember, City of
Santa Rosa



Jan M. Lindenthal
Chief Real Estate Development
Officer, MidPen Housing



Efrén Carrillo
Director of Gov't and
Community Relations,
Burbank Housing



Robin Stephani
Chair, Sonoma County
Alliance Housing Task Force



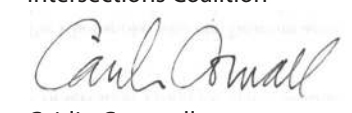
Ramona Faith
CEO, Petaluma Health Care
District



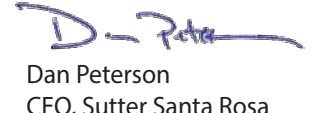
Daniel Weinzveg
Director, Sonoma
Intersections Coalition



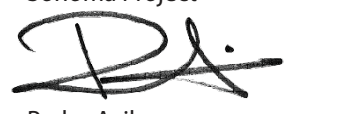
Hamish Gray
Senior Vice President
Corporate Services,
Keysight Technologies, Inc.



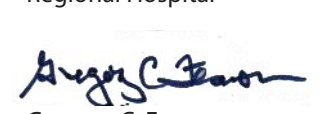
Caitlin Cornwall
Director, Sustainable
Sonoma Project



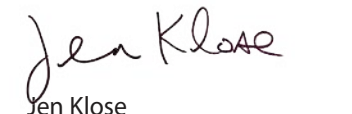
Dan Peterson
CEO, Sutter Santa Rosa
Regional Hospital



Pedro Avila
Vice President, Student
Services; Assistant
Superintendent, Santa Rosa
Junior College



Gregory C. Fearon
President, Homeless
Emergency Aid Program
Association



Jen Klose
Executive Director,
Generation Housing;
Santa Rosa School Board of
Education Member



Ronit Rubinoff
Executive Director,
Legal Aid of Sonoma County



**GENERATION
HOUSING**

GenerationHousing.org

If you would like to add your name as a signatory to the copy of the letter sent directly to the Governor and the Treasurer, please send an email to housing@generationhousing.org, with "Add My Name" in the subject and provide your name and city of residence in the body of the email by 8:00 a.m. on Tuesday, February 11, 2020.