



December 8, 2020

The Honorable Bill Dodd
Member, California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 4032
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Senate Bill 52 – SUPPORT
As Introduced December 7, 2020**

Dear Senator Dodd:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), I am writing to express our support for your Senate Bill 52, concerning the California Emergency Services Act (CESA). RCRC is an association of thirty-seven rural California counties, and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from those member counties.

RCRC member counties have suffered the lion's share of destruction caused by catastrophic wildfires over the past decade and experienced most of the state's public safety power shutoff (PSPS) events. We do not underestimate the risk of wildfire danger and appreciate the role that expertly-informed, tailored PSPS events play in avoiding catastrophic wildfires. At the same time, the awesome power to deenergize individuals and communities cannot be taken lightly and must always be used as a last resort.

SB 52 clarifies that deenergization events (also known as PSPS events) qualify as events for which a state of emergency or local emergency can be declared under the CESA. RCRC believes that this clarification is helpful to provide greater flexibility to local agencies to respond to PSPS events and to seek financial assistance from the state to recover costs associated with those activities. Local governments often have limited resources and PSPS events over the last two years imposed significant unexpected costs in terms of labor overtime, setting up resource centers, checking on medically sensitive residents, and procuring backup generators to ensure that critical facilities remain operational throughout the event.

While we acknowledge that the utilities are making substantial investments to harden their infrastructure and increase resiliency, hundreds of thousands of Californians still had their power shut off during one or more PSPS event this year. Some of those

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events coincided with extreme heat and poor local air quality. We remain deeply concerned that PSPS events pose substantial risks, including endangering lives and property and the operation of critical infrastructure. Moreover, PSPS events can have debilitating economic consequences in many of our communities, where local governments are often least able to shoulder the additional costs and lost revenues.

For these reasons, we support your SB 52. If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at jkennedy@rcrcnet.org or (916) 447-4806.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Kennedy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping "J" and "K".

JOHN KENNEDY
Legislative Advocate

cc: Members of the Senate Governmental Organization Committee
Felipe Lopez, Chief Consultant, Senate Governmental Organization Committee