



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

Legislation Text

File #: 18-554, **Version:** 1

To: Board of Supervisors

From: County Administrative Office

SUBJECT:

Liability for California Wildfires

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors support the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) and Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) response to utility companies requesting legislative action to limit and/or comprehensively restrict negligent liability on the part of Investor Owned Utilities (IOUs) for 2017 California wildfires and future wildfires.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

N/A

DISCUSSION:

The 2017 fire season was among the worst in California history. Several municipalities have filed lawsuits against IOUs for their role in the cause of the wildfires. The IOUs recently submitted a letter to state legislative leaders requesting the state to:

1. Modernize vegetation and forest management practices for fire prevention and carbon sequestration.
2. Ensure utility and public infrastructure is designed, constructed and operated to maximize resiliency to extreme weather events and natural disasters.
3. Enhance the emergency response system, including consideration of mutual aid resources, telecommunications, 911 systems, and community needs, particularly in low-income and vulnerable rural and urban communities.
4. Examine the availability of insurance products in high wildfire areas in light of increased risks from climate change.
5. Update liability rules and regulations for utility services in light of changing climate and the increased severity and frequency of weather events.

While many of these requests are in line with your Board's recent addition of the climate change legislative platform, the fifth request, to alter negligent liability on the part of utility companies is of particular interest.

Staff recommends supporting the efforts of CSAC and RCRC to prevent changes to liability laws for IOUs.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no additional cost to supporting the efforts of CSAC and RCRC.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

N/A

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Board discretion

ATTACHMENTS:

1. California State Association of Counties letter regarding Liability for 2017 California Wildfire
2. Utility company letter

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No.: N/A

Meeting of: N/A