

ACONA Meeting Notes
August 26, 2025

Altadena Community Legislative & Recovery Meeting

Welcome & Opening Remarks

- Meeting opened with reminders about muting and recording.
- Host acknowledged a full agenda, focused on wildfire recovery legislation.
- Future meetings may be held to cover additional bills.
- Team members recognized for community organizing efforts.

Process for Q&A:

- Questions should relate to legislation.
- Community roundup is for updates only.
- Inappropriate or off-topic questions will not be addressed.
- Civil, respectful dialogue is emphasized.

Community Roundup

Captain Ethan Marquez – Law Enforcement & Safety

- Reported on crime statistics:
 - Aggravated assaults down ~50% from last month.
 - Residential burglaries remain steady at 7 cases.
 - Nighttime incidents are most common.
- Urged residents to use crime prevention strategies (Ring cameras, trail cams).
- Shared details on Team Rubicon's fencing program: free safety fencing and "no trespassing" signs for properties. Requires a "letter of agency" from Sheriff's Department.

John Mayo – Block Captain Program

- Representing *Altogether* community organization.
- 160 volunteer neighborhood leaders across ~100 zones, strongest in fire-impacted areas.

- Flexible model: captains cover anywhere from 10 to 100 homes.
- Goal: ensure consistent, trusted communication and reduce misinformation.
- Currently building 10 working groups on topics like purchasing power, school redevelopment, and bio-remediation.
- Always seeking new captains to expand coverage.

Alma Cielo – Community Arts Project

- Introducing “A Thousand Voices Altadena Mosaic” project.
- Uses fire-site pottery shards and new clay to create a community mosaic preserving history and culture.
- Monthly workshops hosted at Zorthian Ranch and with Side Street Projects.
- Goal: involve at least 1,000 residents in the mosaic as a healing and creative process.
- Also offering free music and land healing events for community recovery.

Natalie Ouwersloot – Foothill Municipal Water District

- Announced a multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plan (FEMA-required).
- Focus: wildfire, earthquake, and flood resilience.
- Public survey underway to gather community perceptions of hazards.
- Draft plan to be presented in early 2026.
- Partnership includes Lincoln Avenue Water Co., Los Flores Water Co., and local agencies

Legislative Updates

Senator Sasha Renee Perez – Legislative Package

Although Senator Perez had to leave early, her staff outlined a package of bills she has authored or co-authored in direct response to the Eaton Fire and its aftermath. These bills are designed to address both immediate needs (safety, housing, insurance) and long-term resilience (rebuilding, infrastructure, financial recovery).

[SB 256 – Utility Line Safety](#)

- What it does: Requires utility companies (like Southern California Edison) to formally identify and remove abandoned or unused power lines.
- Why it matters: Investigations show that poorly maintained or abandoned lines may have sparked recent wildfires. Without oversight, they pose a hidden

hazard.

- Additional tools in the bill:
 - Undergrounding (burying power lines) where feasible.
 - More robust wildfire mitigation planning and emergency response coordination with the state's Office of Emergency Services.
- Takeaway for residents: This bill directly targets one of the root causes of wildfires — outdated and neglected electrical infrastructure. By forcing utilities to account for and safely remove abandoned lines, it reduces future fire risks.

[SB 293 – Generational Homeownership Protection Act](#)

- What it does: Gives families impacted by disasters more time (up to 3 years instead of 6 months) to fix property ownership records.
- Why it matters: Many Altadena homes are passed down informally through generations, especially in historic Black neighborhoods. After the fire, families discovered that homes were still legally in the name of grandparents or deceased relatives, creating problems with disaster aid and property taxes.
- How it helps:
 - Prevents families from being hit with unexpected back taxes.
 - Protects eligibility for homeowner tax benefits (like Proposition 19).
- Takeaway for residents: This bill ensures that fire survivors can sort out ownership paperwork without financial penalties, protecting generational wealth.

[SB 610 – Tenants & Homeowners Disaster Protections](#)

- What it does: Strengthens protections for tenants and homeowners after a disaster.
- Key provisions:
 - Landlords must repair units damaged by smoke, ash, or fire — not tenants.
 - Units impacted by disaster debris are presumed uninhabitable.
 - Tenants are not required to pay rent during mandatory evacuation orders.

- Expands post-disaster mortgage forbearance options, requiring state coordination with mortgage lenders.
- Why it matters: After the Eaton Fire, some tenants were wrongly told by landlords that they had to clean or pay for damage themselves. This bill clarifies responsibilities and closes those loopholes.
- Takeaway for residents: Tenants gain stronger legal protections, and homeowners get clearer rights for mortgage relief.

[SB 782 – Disaster Recovery Financing Districts](#)

- What it does: Creates a local financing mechanism (similar to redevelopment districts) to fund community rebuilding after a disaster.
- How it works:
 - Local “recovery districts” can be established.
 - These districts can pool funds, access state revenue, and dedicate money to public infrastructure, housing, and economic recovery.
 - Requires public participation to ensure funds reflect community needs.
- Why it matters: Rebuilding after a disaster is not only slow but also expensive. This bill gives local governments faster, more flexible tools to invest in recovery without waiting on piecemeal state or federal aid.
- Takeaway for residents: SB 782 creates a financial engine for rebuilding, ensuring that resources are earmarked specifically for recovery in places like Altadena.

Assemblymember John Harabedian – Legislative Package

Assemblymember Harabedian’s office presented six wildfire recovery bills, all designed to tackle different aspects of recovery — financial, housing, insurance, and mental health.

[AB 238 – Mortgage Forbearance Act](#)

- What it does: Allows disaster-impacted homeowners to pause mortgage payments for up to one year (in 90-day increments).
- Important detail: At the end of the forbearance period, banks cannot demand a lump sum repayment. Payments must be restructured.
- Why it matters: Survivors often face double housing costs — paying a mortgage on a destroyed home and rent for temporary housing. This bill ensures families

aren't crushed by that burden.

[AB 239 – Disaster Housing Task Force](#)

- What it does: Creates a state-level task force to streamline coordination between federal, state, and local governments in delivering housing resources after a disaster.
- Why it matters: Right now, recovery money often gets delayed by bureaucracy and miscommunication. This task force acts like a “quarterback” to make sure funds flow quickly to survivors.

[AB 493 – Insurance Escrow Interest \(*awaiting Governor's signature*\)](#)

- What it does: Requires that any interest earned on insurance settlement funds held in escrow must go to the policyholder, not the bank.
- Why it matters: Currently, banks profit off survivors' settlement funds while families wait for rebuilding money. This bill ensures every dollar earned goes back to homeowners.

[AB 597 – Public Adjuster Reform](#)

- What it does: Limits public adjusters' fees to only the additional funds they recover, not the entire settlement.
- Why it matters: Some adjusters currently take fees on the full amount (including money you already secured). This bill protects survivors from being overcharged for help they didn't need.

[AB 797 – Community Stabilization Act](#)

- What it does: Gives nonprofits (like Habitat for Humanity) access to state funding to purchase fire-damaged properties at fair market value, preventing corporate investors from buying up land.
- Why it matters: Without protections, large outside firms (like BlackRock) could buy properties, displace long-term residents, and change the community's character.
- Takeaway: Keeps ownership and redevelopment in community hands, ensuring Altadena rebuilds for residents, not outside profit.

[AB 1032 – Post-Disaster Mental Health Coverage](#)

- What it does: Requires insurance companies to cover up to 12 counseling visits in the year following a disaster.
- Why it matters: Survivors face deep trauma after losing homes, neighbors, and a sense of stability. This ensures access to mental health care without additional financial strain.

SB 629 – Keeping Communities Safe from Wildfires Act

- What it does: Expands high fire hazard zones on state fire maps and requires:
 - Annual defensible space inspections.
 - Stronger application of Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) building codes.
 - Updates to fire hazard maps to reflect new risks, including urban conflagrations (where houses themselves become fire fuel).
- Why it matters: Many residents felt previous maps underestimated Altadena's fire risk. This bill ensures that communities actually affected by fires are formally recognized and protected.
- Takeaway: Altadena properties may now fall under stricter safety requirements, but with the goal of reducing risk and ensuring long-term resilience.

Legislative Summary and Q&A (Altadena Community Meeting – Organized by Bill)

Senator Sasha Renee Perez – Legislative Package SB 256 – Utility Line Safety

Summary:

- Requires utilities (like SoCal Edison) to identify and remove abandoned or unused power lines.
- Directs investment into undergrounding low-voltage distribution lines, not high-voltage transmission lines.
- Strengthens wildfire mitigation planning, emergency response coordination, and oversight by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC).
- Goal: Reduce fire ignition risks from outdated and neglected infrastructure.

Q&A Highlights:

- Q: *Will SB 256 require undergrounding of all power lines?*
A: No. It applies specifically to distribution (low-voltage) lines. Transmission lines are not included. CPUC will review how costs are allocated to minimize the

burden on ratepayers.

SB 610 – Tenants & Homeowners Disaster Protections

Summary:

- Clarifies that landlords — not tenants — must repair fire, smoke, and ash damage.
- Presumes units with disaster debris are uninhabitable.
- Tenants are not obligated to pay rent during mandatory evacuation orders.
- Requires coordination with mortgage lenders to facilitate mortgage forbearance after disasters.

Q&A Highlights:

- Q: *Will SB 610 mortgage forbearance apply retroactively?*
A: No. The bill only applies to future disasters once enacted. Current survivors' cases must be handled individually with the assistance of state agencies.

SB 782 – Disaster Recovery Financing Districts

Summary:

- Creates local financing districts to rapidly mobilize resources for disaster recovery.
- Districts can dedicate funds to public infrastructure, housing, and resilience projects.
- Requires community engagement to ensure funds reflect local needs.
- Goal: Provide a financial engine for recovery, reducing delays from state/federal bureaucracy.

Q&A Highlights:

- Q: *Will SB 782 only benefit wealthier neighborhoods that can afford undergrounding and improvements?*
A: No. The bill ensures funds can be targeted to fire-impacted communities, not just those with wealth. It complements SB 256's undergrounding provisions.

Assemblymember John Harabedian – Legislative Package

AB 797 – Community Stabilization Act

Summary:

- Allows nonprofits (like Habitat for Humanity) to purchase disaster-damaged properties at fair market value, using Community Reinvestment Act funds.
- Prevents corporate investors (like BlackRock) from buying up land and displacing long-term residents.
- Nonprofits are required to redevelop and resell to community members within a set period.

Q&A Highlights:

- Q: *Are nonprofits required to sell property within a timeframe?*
A: Yes. Nonprofits have up to 10 years to redevelop and sell. The intent is to allow groups like Habitat for Humanity to rebuild and return homes to community residents.

Additional Legislative Context

SB 629 – Keeping Communities Safe from Wildfires Act (*Co-authored by Senator Perez*)

Summary:

- Expands the High Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps.
- Applies Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) building codes and requires defensible space inspections annually in fire-prone areas.
- Updates maps to include urban conflagration risks (where homes themselves can fuel fire spread).
- Goal: Accurately capture communities like Altadena that were previously under-classified, ensuring stronger protections.

Q&A Highlights:

- Q: *Will this expand high fire zones in Altadena?*
A: Yes, likely. The bill expands maps to include previously burned areas and urban conflagration risks, meaning more of Altadena would fall under fire safety regulations

From the Chat:

Victoria Knapp Chair Altadena Town Council

If you are interested in having safety fencing installed at your property by Team Rubicon, please call 469-578-7083. You will need to complete both an ROE to give them permission and a Letter of Agency with the Sheriff's Station.

John Mayo 🌲 Altgether

Visit altgether.org to learn more about Altgether or see if we have a captain in your area. Thanks!

Alma Cielo 7:26 PM

To find out more about the Community Art Project- almasoulsky@gmail.com

I am working on a website for the Thousand Voices Project, but you can contact me via FB Alma Cielo and IG almacielol, or by almasoulsky@gmail.com.

For the Land Healing: <https://www.soulforceproject.com/land-healing-altadena>

Natalie Ouwersloot 7:31 PM

The Hazard Mitigation Plan public survey can be found here: [Foothill Municipal Water District Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan Public Hazard Awareness Survey](#) Thank you!

Darla Dyson - Sen. Pérez field rep

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