



Brent Blackaby  
Councilmember District 6

## **SUPPLEMENTAL AGENDA MATERIAL for Supplemental Packet 2**

**Meeting Date:** April 28, 2026

**Item Number:** #11

**Item Description:** Resolution Supporting Megafire Prevention Package

**Submitted by:** Councilmember Blackaby

Adding letters of support from the Disaster and Fire Safety Commission Chair and the Mayor's appointee.



Brent Blackaby  
Councilmember District 6

CONSENT CALENDAR  
April 28, 2026

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Blackaby (Author), Mayor Ishii (Co-Sponsor), Councilmember O'Keefe (Co-Sponsor), Councilmember Humbert (Co-Sponsor)

Subject: Resolution Supporting Megafire Prevention Package

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution supporting the 2026 Joint Megafire Prevention Package in the California Legislature supported by Megafire Action, FireWERX, California Fire Safe Council, and the Karuk Tribe, among others. [In addition, approve letters of support from the Disaster and Fire Safety Commission Chair and the Mayor's appointee.](#) Send a copy of the Resolution [and letters](#) to the six authors, Senator Jesse Arreguín, Assemblymember Buffy Wicks, and Governor Gavin Newsom.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The legislative package includes 13 bills from California State Senators Allen, Becker and Stern, alongside California Assemblymembers Bennett, Connolly and Rogers. The bills include resilience loan financing, home hardening, expansion of existing fire mitigation programs, reducing barriers to beneficial fire and more. They are as follows:

1. [SB 894 \(Allen\)](#): Wildfire Mitigation Affordability Act
2. [SB 973 \(Becker\)](#): Wildfire County Coordinator Program
3. [SB 911 \(Becker\)](#): Transfer of real property: compliance documentation
4. [SB 1079 \(Stern\)](#): Fire Innovation Unit Act
5. [SB 1404 \(Stern\)](#): Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan: Implementation Strategy
6. [AB 1699 \(Rogers\)](#): Good Fire Act
7. [AB 1891 \(Connolly\)](#): Beneficial Fire Capacity Program
8. [AB 1934 \(Bennett\)](#): Home Hardening Certification Program
9. [AB 1960 \(Bennett\)](#): Wildfire Prevention Grants Program
10. [AB 1964 \(Bennett\)](#): County Recorder: Home Hardening
11. [AB 1971 \(Bennett\)](#): Home Hardening Retrofitting Improvements
12. [AB 1986 \(Bennett\)](#): Residential Property Insurance – Home Hardening
13. [AB 2013 \(Bennett\)](#): Water Suppliers – Emergency Preparedness Program

## BACKGROUND

Wildfire mitigation is becoming increasingly critical as climate change intensifies fire risk. Fire seasons are growing longer, and wildfires are becoming more frequent and destructive. As a result, many homeowners have lost access to traditional home insurance due to wildfire risk. Many are left with California's FAIR Plan—the insurer of last resort—which often costs significantly more while providing far less coverage.

A wildfire in the Berkeley Hills would have devastating consequences not only for the surrounding neighborhoods but for all of Berkeley and the broader region. The environmental damage, economic disruption, and potential loss of human life would be profound.

For these reasons, it is prudent for government to implement effective strategies to reduce the risk of destructive megafires. Berkeley has long been committed to wildfire mitigation through decades of programs supporting residents, including the Chipper Program and property inspections, as well as newer initiatives such as Firewise Communities, Effective Mitigations for Berkeley's Ember Resilience (EMBER), and the Residential Assistance Program (RAP).

By supporting the Joint Megafire Prevention Package of legislative bills, Berkeley affirms its commitment to comprehensive wildfire mitigation and homeowner assistance for defensible space and home hardening efforts. This package will help restore resilience to our landscapes, provide homeowners with clear guidance and resources to reduce wildfire risk, and accelerate the adoption of new technologies that give firefighters and communities better tools to protect lives and property—here in Berkeley and statewide.

## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

Wildfire has detrimental effects on air, water and the environment. Passage of legislation to reduce the chances of a wildfire align with the City's goals in environmental sustainability and reducing climate impacts.

## CONTACT PERSON

Councilmember Brent Blackaby    Council District 6    510-981-7160

Attachments:

1: Resolution

2: [Letters of Support](#)

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

RESOLUTION SUPPORTING MEGAFIRE PREVENTION PACKAGE

WHEREAS, the City of Berkeley is no stranger to destructive wildfire, including the 1923 wind-driven fire that burned from the eastern slope of the Berkeley Hills down to the corner of Shattuck and Hearst, destroying 640 structures on the northside of the UC campus, leaving thousands homeless, as well as the 1991 Oakland Hills Firestorm, which included the Berkeley Hills, and killed 25 people; and

WHEREAS, the City of Berkeley is steadfast in its wildfire prevention actions including programs for vegetation management, home hardening, and financial assistance; and

WHEREAS, the 2026 Joint Megafire Prevention Package represents one of the most comprehensive wildfire mitigation efforts in recent years—providing homeowners with clear guidance and resources to reduce risk, restoring resilience to our landscapes, and accelerating the adoption of new technologies that equip firefighters and communities to better protect lives and property -- here in Berkeley and statewide; and

WHEREAS, California State Senators Allen, Becker and Stern, and California Assemblymembers Bennett, Connolly and Rogers introduced a comprehensive package of 13 bills, aimed at mitigating destructive megafires; and

WHEREAS, Senator Allen introduced SB 894: Wildfire Mitigation Affordability Act; and

WHEREAS, Senator Becker introduced SB 973: Wildfire County Coordinator Program and SB 911: Transfer of real property: compliance documentation; and

WHEREAS, Senator Stern introduced SB 1079: Fire Innovation Unit Act and SB 1404: Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan: Implementation Strategy; and

WHEREAS, Assemblymember Rogers introduced AB 1699: Good Fire Act; and

WHEREAS, Assemblymember Connolly introduced AB 1891: Beneficial Fire Capacity Program; and

WHEREAS, Assemblymember Bennett introduced AB 1934: Home Hardening Certification Program, AB 1960: Wildfire Prevention Grants Program, AB 1964: County Recorder: Home Hardening, AB 1971: Home Hardening Retrofitting Improvements , AB 1986: Residential Property Insurance – Home Hardening, and AB 2013: Water Suppliers – Emergency Preparedness Program.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that the Council strongly supports all of these bills, collectively called the Megafire Prevention Package, urging them to be passed and signed into law this year.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Berkeley City Council thanks the six authors, Senators Allen, Becker and Stern, and Assemblymembers Bennett, Connolly and Rogers. The City Council also thanks all who were instrumental in developing the legislation, including Megafire Action, FireWERX, California Fire Safe Council, and the Karuk Tribe.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that this Resolution be sent to the six authors, Senator Jesse Arreguín, Assemblymember Buffy Wicks, and Governor Gavin Newsom.

## **ATTACHMENT 2 – Letters of Support**

*Letter of Support - SB 894 (Allen): Wildfire Mitigation Affordability Act*

April 28, 2026

The Honorable Ben Allen  
California State Senate, District 24  
State Capitol, Room 2054  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Letter of Support - SB 894 (Allen): Wildfire Mitigation Affordability Act / California Wildfire Resilience Loan Program

Dear Senator Allen:

On behalf of the City of Berkeley, I am writing to express strong support for Senate Bill 894, the Wildfire Mitigation Affordability Act, which would establish the California Wildfire Resilience Loan Program. The Berkeley Disaster and Fire Safety Commission recommended this support position at its March 25, 2026 meeting, and the City Council is pleased to formally transmit this letter as part of our broader support for the 2026 Joint Megafire Prevention Package.

Berkeley is acutely aware of the wildfire risk facing our community. The Berkeley Hills are designated a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, and the memory of the 1991 Tunnel Fire - which destroyed more than 3,300 homes and claimed 25 lives - shapes our ongoing commitment to wildfire preparedness and mitigation. Despite that commitment, the upfront cost of home hardening and defensible space improvements remains a significant barrier for many residents, particularly those of moderate means who may not qualify for or have access to affordable private financing.

SB 894's approach - leveraging CAEATFA's proven financing expertise to create a loan loss reserve and interest rate buy-down program - is precisely the right model to address this barrier at scale. By reducing the cost and risk of private lending for wildfire resilience improvements, the bill would mobilize investment that neither government grants nor property-tax-based financing alone can achieve. The program's statewide scope and its availability to properties regardless of hazard zone designation would ensure that communities like Berkeley, with significant WUI risk throughout our hillside neighborhoods, can fully participate.

The City of Berkeley has long worked to advance wildfire resiliency, including through a Transfer Tax Rebate for home hardening and ongoing resident assistance initiatives. SB 894 would complement and extend these local efforts by providing the affordable financing infrastructure our residents need to take action at scale. We also recognize that improved home hardening at scale is essential to stabilizing the homeowner's insurance market in California's most vulnerable communities, and we strongly support that goal.

The City of Berkeley urges the Legislature to pass SB 894 and respectfully requests the Governor's signature. We look forward to working with your office and with CAEATFA to ensure Berkeley residents are well-positioned to benefit from this program.

Sincerely,

Mayor, City of Berkeley

**cc:**

Senator Jesse Arreguín, California State Senate, District 9  
Assemblymember Buffy Wicks, California State Assembly, District 14  
Governor Gavin Newsom  
Assemblymember Bennett  
Assemblymember Connolly  
Assemblymember Rogers  
Senator Becker  
Senator Stern

*Letter of Support - SB 911 and SB 973 (Becker)*

April 28, 2026

The Honorable Josh Becker  
California State Senate, District 13  
State Capitol, Suite 6520  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Letter of Support - SB 911 (Becker): Transfer of Real Property: Compliance Documentation; and SB 973 (Becker): Wildfire County Coordinator Program

Dear Senator Becker:

On behalf of the City of Berkeley, I am pleased to write in strong support of Senate Bills 911 and 973, two of your contributions to the 2026 Joint Megafire Prevention Package. Together, these bills address two of the most critical infrastructure gaps in California's wildfire resilience framework: county-level planning and coordination capacity, and the information available to homebuyers about the fire safety status of properties they are purchasing.

SB 973 would formalize and expand the Wildfire County Coordinator Program in statute, directing CAL FIRE to develop standardized wildfire risk assessment guidance and requiring the program to be administered by the California Fire Safe Council. The program's track record is extraordinary - since 2021, it has secured more than \$104 million for local mitigation projects and reached nearly 1 million California residents with wildfire resilience education. Placing this program on a durable statutory footing, with clear requirements for data collection, risk assessment standards, and coordination with local and regional partners, is essential to sustaining and growing these results. Berkeley and Alameda County have benefited from this kind of county-level coordination, and we strongly support codifying it.

SB 911 would strengthen the requirement that sellers of real property in high and very high fire hazard severity zones provide buyers with documentation of compliance with fire safety requirements. Ensuring that homebuyers in fire-risk areas have clear, verified information about a property's wildfire safety status at the point of sale is a straightforward and important transparency measure. It creates an additional market incentive for sellers to complete required hardening and defensible space work before listing, and it ensures that buyers understand what they are purchasing. Berkeley's own experience with its Transfer Tax Rebate program has demonstrated the value of connecting home hardening compliance with the real estate transaction process.

The City of Berkeley urges the Legislature to pass both SB 911 and SB 973.

Sincerely,

Mayor, City of Berkeley

**cc:**

Senator Jesse Arreguín, California State Senate, District 9  
Assemblymember Buffy Wicks, California State Assembly, District 14  
Governor Gavin Newsom  
Assemblymember Bennett  
Assemblymember Connolly  
Assemblymember Rogers  
Senator Allen  
Senator Stern

*Letter of Support - SB 1079 and SB 1404 (Stern)*

April 28, 2026

The Honorable Henry Stern  
California State Senate, District 27  
State Capitol, Suite 7710  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Letter of Support - SB 1079 (Stern): Fire Innovation Unit Act; and SB 1404 (Stern):  
Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan: Implementation Strategy

Dear Senator Stern:

On behalf of the City of Berkeley, I am pleased to write in strong support of Senate Bills 1079 and 1404, your contributions to the 2026 Joint Megafire Prevention Package. These bills address California's urgent need for both a more agile approach to deploying wildfire technology and a stronger mechanism for implementing the state's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan.

SB 1079 would establish a Fire Innovation Unit within CAL FIRE - serving as the state's principal hub for wildfire technology research, coordination, procurement, and deployment. The pace of innovation in wildfire detection, prediction, and suppression technologies is outrunning California's current capacity to evaluate, pilot, and scale those technologies. Firefighters and land managers need streamlined access to early detection systems, decision support tools, and suppression innovations that can make a meaningful difference in the first critical minutes and hours of a fire. The Fire Innovation Unit's structure - with dedicated offices for technology research, outreach and coordination, and rapid acquisition and deployment - creates a formal, coherent pathway from promising technology to statewide operational use. Berkeley strongly supports this approach and believes it will make California firefighters and communities meaningfully safer.

SB 1404 would strengthen the implementation of California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan by establishing a dedicated implementation funding strategy linked to the plan's goals and key actions. California has developed sophisticated wildfire resilience planning over the past decade, but the gap between planning and on-the-ground execution has been a persistent challenge. SB 1404 addresses this gap directly, and Berkeley supports the bill's intent to ensure that the Action Plan's objectives translate into funded, accountable implementation.

The City of Berkeley urges the Legislature to pass both SB 1079 and SB 1404.

Sincerely,

Mayor, City of Berkeley

**cc:**

Senator Jesse Arreguín, California State Senate, District 9  
Assemblymember Buffy Wicks, California State Assembly, District 14  
Governor Gavin Newsom  
Assemblymember Bennett  
Assemblymember Connolly  
Assemblymember Rogers  
Senator Allen  
Senator Becker

*Letter of Support - AB 1699 (Rogers): Good Fire Act*

April 28, 2026

The Honorable Chris Rogers  
California State Assembly, District 7  
P.O. Box 942849  
Sacramento, CA 94249-0002

Re: Letter of Support - AB 1699 (Rogers): Good Fire Act

Dear Assemblymember Rogers:

On behalf of the City of Berkeley, I am pleased to write in strong support of Assembly Bill 1699, the Good Fire Act. This legislation addresses one of the most consequential and underappreciated barriers to wildfire risk reduction in California: the liability, permitting, and certification obstacles that have significantly constrained the pace and scale of prescribed and cultural burns.

Berkeley is located in a region with a severe fire deficit - the accumulated result of decades of fire suppression policy that has allowed fuel loads to build across East Bay open space and wildland areas. While it is not feasible to conduct prescribed burns within Berkeley's city limits, the regional landscape surrounding our community carries a level of fuel loading that poses serious risk to Berkeley's hillside neighborhoods. Wind-driven fires igniting in open space to our east could reach Berkeley's Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone even from miles away. Reducing regional fuel loads through beneficial fire is therefore a direct Berkeley safety interest.

AB 1699 would expand the California certified Burn Boss (CA-RX) program, which provides training and certification for prescribed burn managers on non-federal land. Prior to CA-RX, certification pathways were largely limited to the federal government, dramatically constraining who could legally manage prescribed burns on private and non-federal public land. The bill would also reform liability standards, shifting from strict liability to a gross negligence standard for certified burn managers operating within approved burn plans and weather parameters. This combination - expanded certification and reduced liability - addresses the two most significant practical barriers that have prevented prescribed fire from scaling to meet expert recommendations.

The East Bay Prescribed Burn Association is currently forming. Its viability and eventual effectiveness depend directly on the training, certification, and liability framework that AB 1699 would establish. Without this legislation, the capacity of the emerging East Bay prescribed fire community to conduct burns at meaningful scale is severely limited. With it, the regional beneficial fire landscape looks dramatically different.

The City of Berkeley urges the Legislature to pass AB 1699.

Sincerely,

Mayor, City of Berkeley

**cc:**

Senator Jesse Arreguín, California State Senate, District 9  
Assemblymember Buffy Wicks, California State Assembly, District 14  
Governor Gavin Newsom  
Assemblymember Bennett  
Assemblymember Connolly  
Senator Allen  
Senator Becker  
Senator Stern

*Letter of Support - AB 1891 (Connolly): Beneficial Fire Capacity Program*

April 28, 2026

The Honorable Damon Connolly  
California State Assembly, District 12  
State Capitol, Suite 5240  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Letter of Support - AB 1891 (Connolly): Beneficial Fire Capacity Program

Dear Assemblymember Connolly:

On behalf of the City of Berkeley, I am pleased to write in strong support of Assembly Bill 1891, the Beneficial Fire Capacity Program. This bill addresses what many fire experts identify as the critical next bottleneck in California's prescribed fire effort: workforce capacity. Even as permitting and regulatory barriers to prescribed burns have been meaningfully reduced in recent years, the shortage of trained and employed practitioners capable of conducting burns at the scale that experts recommend remains a profound constraint.

AB 1891 would dedicate 10 percent of CAL FIRE's annual allocation from the California Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund to a grant program for beneficial fire workforce development, with 25 percent of those funds dedicated to tribal programs. Eligible recipients would include Prescribed Burn Associations, local nonprofits, fire agencies, landowners, and Conservation Corps programs - exactly the organizations doing the on-the-ground work of expanding beneficial fire in California's most fire-deficient landscapes.

The workforce development problem is not simply a matter of numbers. Historically, grant funding for prescribed fire has been sporadic and shifting, making it difficult for organizations to invest in staff, training programs, or the multi-year maintenance of burn projects when their funding might disappear at any moment. AB 1891's approach - establishing a sustainable, dedicated funding stream tied to an existing and durable revenue source - addresses this structural problem directly. Organizations like East Bay Regional Park District and the nascent East Bay Prescribed Burn Association would be potential beneficiaries, and a sustained funding stream would dramatically expand their capacity to conduct beneficial fire projects in the landscapes surrounding Berkeley.

We also note the bill's important recognition of California Tribes as essential partners in beneficial fire. Tribal nations have stewarded California's landscapes through fire since time immemorial; their knowledge, leadership, and authority are irreplaceable in any serious beneficial fire effort. The 25 percent tribal set-aside reflects this and ensures that the bill's resources support tribal-led programs at meaningful scale.

The City of Berkeley urges the Legislature to pass AB 1891.

Sincerely,

Mayor, City of Berkeley

**cc:**

Senator Jesse Arreguín, California State Senate, District 9  
Assemblymember Buffy Wicks, California State Assembly, District 14  
Governor Gavin Newsom  
Assemblymember Bennett  
Assemblymember Rogers  
Senator Allen  
Senator Becker  
Senator Stern

*Letter of Support - AB 1934, AB 1960, AB 1964, AB 1971, AB 1986, and AB 2013  
(Bennett)*

April 28, 2026

The Honorable Steve Bennett  
California State Assembly, District 38  
State Capitol, Suite 4710  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Letter of Support - AB 1934, AB 1960, AB 1964, AB 1971, AB 1986, and AB 2013  
(Bennett): Home Hardening and Community Preparedness Package

Dear Assemblymember Bennett:

On behalf of the City of Berkeley, I am pleased to write in strong support of your six-bill package as part of the 2026 Joint Megafire Prevention Package. These bills reflect a sophisticated and integrated approach to accelerating home hardening and community preparedness in wildfire-vulnerable communities, and they address barriers that Berkeley has encountered directly in our own local efforts.

AB 1934 would direct the State Fire Marshal's Wildfire Mitigation Advisory Committee to develop a home hardening certification program - establishing clear, verifiable standards for what it means for a home to be 'hardened' against wildfire. This is a foundational piece that gives meaning to the other bills in your package and to broader legislative efforts: without a clear certification standard, incentives, grants, insurance disclosures, and tax policies all lack an objective benchmark to reference. Berkeley strongly supports establishing this standard.

AB 1960 would prioritize state wildfire prevention grants for communities where at least 50 percent of homes have earned home hardening certification. This provision recognizes a fundamental truth about wildfire risk: community-level protection increases exponentially as more homes in a neighborhood are hardened. A single hardened home in a block of vulnerable structures provides limited protection; a neighborhood where the majority of homes are hardened behaves qualitatively differently in a fire. Aligning grant prioritization with community-level adoption rates creates a powerful incentive for collective action.

AB 1964 would require a statewide survey identifying homes in fire-risk areas that still need hardening and assessing the remaining steps. This is essential information for targeting state resources, measuring progress, and holding programs accountable. Berkeley has found through its own programs that knowing where the hardening gap exists - by neighborhood, by housing type, by income level - is necessary for effective outreach and assistance. AB 1964 would provide this intelligence at statewide scale.

AB 1971 would exempt home hardening improvements from increased property tax reassessments, removing a disincentive that has no rational policy justification.

Homeowners who invest in making their homes more fire-safe should not face a higher property tax bill as a result. This exemption is analogous to existing exemptions for seismic retrofitting and solar installations, and it reflects the same principle: the state should not impose tax penalties on property improvements that serve important public safety and environmental goals.

AB 1986 would require insurers to provide homeowners with side-by-side premium quotes showing what they would pay for coverage on their property as-is and what they would pay if the home were fully hardened to state certification standards. This transparency requirement addresses a critical information gap: many homeowners do not know how much they could save on insurance premiums by completing hardening improvements, and many are not aware that hardening can restore access to coverage they have lost. Making the potential savings visible at the point of insurance interaction creates a powerful and direct incentive for investment.

AB 2013 would establish enhanced emergency preparedness requirements for water suppliers in fire-risk areas, ensuring that the water systems that firefighters depend on meet minimum performance standards under fire conditions. Water supply reliability is a critical and often overlooked component of community-level fire preparedness, and Berkeley supports requiring that our water suppliers plan for the demands of a major wildfire event.

Taken together, your six bills represent a coherent and mutually reinforcing strategy to make home hardening the norm rather than the exception in California's fire-risk communities. The City of Berkeley urges the Legislature to pass all six bills.

Sincerely,

Mayor, City of Berkeley

**cc:**

Senator Jesse Arreguín, California State Senate, District 9  
Assemblymember Buffy Wicks, California State Assembly, District 14  
Governor Gavin Newsom  
Assemblymember Connolly  
Assemblymember Rogers  
Senator Allen  
Senator Becker  
Senator Stern