



County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors

Agenda Item Submittal

From: Office of Response, Recovery and Resilience

Subject: Send a letter supporting the Facilitating Increased Resilience, Environmental Weatherization and Lowered Liability (FIREWALL) Act

Meeting Date: June 10, 2025

Formal Title: Direct the Board Chair to send a letter supporting the Facilitating Increased Resilience, Environmental Weatherization and Lowered Liability (FIREWALL) Act to relevant Congressional offices and committees

Recommended Actions

Direct the Board Chair to send a letter of legislative support for the Facilitating Increased Resilience, Environmental Weatherization and Lowered Liability (FIREWALL) Act, and to submit the letter to relevant Congressional representatives, committees and stakeholders.

Executive Summary

The Office of Response, Recovery and Resilience recommends that the Board of Supervisors support the bipartisan FIREWALL Act, which would provide refundable tax credits to residents for investments in home resilience upgrades. Given Santa Cruz County's repeated exposure to devastating natural disasters—including wildfires, floods, earthquakes, and landslides—the County has a vested interest in policies that help communities prepare for and reduce the impacts of these events. The bill has already garnered support from local governments, national associations, and public safety organizations, and aligns closely with our County's resilience and disaster preparedness goals.

Discussion

Santa Cruz County is no stranger to disaster. In recent decades, our region has endured the 1982 floods, the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, the 1995 Pajaro River levee breach, the devastating 2020 CZU Lightning Complex fires, and most recently the 2023 Pajaro levee failure, which forced the evacuation of thousands and caused hundreds of millions in damages. These events continue to test the resilience of our communities and highlight the need for proactive federal support to strengthen local infrastructure and reduce future disaster impacts.

The FIREWALL Act addresses this need by establishing a new federal tax credit for home resilience upgrades. Specifically, it provides a 50% refundable credit, up to \$25,000, for eligible mitigation expenditures that enhance a home's ability to withstand wildfires, floods, earthquakes, and other natural disasters. The credit is available to households earning up to \$200,000 annually, with a gradual phase-out at higher incomes, and is indexed to inflation. Eligible improvements include fire-resistant roofing and siding, seismic retrofits, flood mitigation systems, and indoor air filtration systems. The credit is accessible to principal residences located in federally declared disaster areas within the past 10 years.

The County of Santa Cruz would be pleased to join the County of San Diego, the Cities of Santa Monica and La Verne, and a broad coalition of stakeholders including the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), the National Association of Counties

(NACo), and the Western Fire Chiefs Association in supporting this important legislation.

The FIREWALL Act offers practical, equitable support for homeowners seeking to protect their properties and communities. It supports County values of public safety, environmental resilience, and equity by ensuring that lower-income households can access critical mitigation funding. We urge Congress to pass this legislation swiftly.

Financial Impact

There is no financial impact to the County for this item.

Strategic Initiatives

Equity Framework - Communications & Education, Community Voices & Partnership
Operational Plan - Comprehensive Health & Safety, Sustainable Environment
Climate Action - Wildfire Prevention

Submitted By:

David Reid, OR3 Director

Recommended By:

Carlos J. Palacios, County Executive Officer

Artificial Intelligence Acknowledgment:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) did not significantly contribute to the development of this agenda item.