Governor Gavin Newsom  
State Capitol, First Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Gavin Newsom:

I write to express my grave concern regarding the public safety power shutoffs (PSPS) yielding disastrous effects across the state and in communities in the 38th Assembly District, which I represent. Though the intent of PSPS is to prevent fires, I have heard from many constituents about the inconvenience, loss of income and dangerous conditions the outages have caused.

Agua Dulce in my district demonstrates how this one-size-fits-all policy has unintentionally caused harm in our communities. The loss of power in this rural canyon community, de-energizing the single local circuit has led to a crisis of its own, as Agua Dulce’s water supply is powered by electricity. This means in addition to the elimination of electrical supply, water flow—a basic necessity for showers and feeding livestock—is gone. I have immense concern for residents as temperatures dip to near-freezing temperatures in the evening and people have nowhere to shelter but in unsafely cold homes, putting their lives at risk.

We live in an age where wildﬁres are the new normal—as evidenced by the recent Saddleridge, Tick and Easy fires in my district in the span of less than three weeks—but this blanket wipeout of ALL power has had multiple unintended consequences that must be addressed and has not proven a panacea to wildfire prevention.

We must come up with far-reaching, comprehensive solutions to mitigate the devastating impacts of these shutoffs. With the next shutoff imminent—and outage durations growing longer—we must right the course for the people of California.

Immediately, the $75 million appropriated for PSPS mitigation through the Budget Act of 2019 should be received by our counties, particularly for unincorporated areas, for immediate disbursement for these critical needs such as the provision of generators. Further, before the next shutoffs, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) should call for SoCal Edison to reassess their mitigation plan for communities with the worst impacts on their livelihoods, such as rural communities dependent on a single circuit.
When neighbors’ safety and livelihood are at stake, it is defeatist to simply express sympathies and refer them to the same resources. My constituents have called repeatedly throughout the last few weeks. Their unfortunate and lackluster interactions with every government agency and the power companies intended to serve them has been disappointing, if not outright shameful. On behalf of the medically fragile and elderly, we must take immediate action to ensure their healthcare and safety, and on behalf of all the communities I represent, this crisis must be the top governing priority as we head into the new year. I look forward to working with your administration to address the challenges ahead.

Sincerely,

Christy Smith
Assemblywoman, 38th Assembly District

CC:
Marybel Batjer
President
California Public Utilities Commission
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