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# California State Senate



**SENATOR  
JIM NIELSEN**

FOURTH SENATE DISTRICT

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VICE CHAIR

June 25, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Skinner  
Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee  
State Capitol, Room 5094  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chair Skinner:

In response to the findings of a recent investigation into the state's wildfire prevention efforts, we formally request a joint Senate Budget Committee oversight hearing with the Senate Natural Resources and Water and Environmental Quality Committees to review the progress of fuel reduction activities in California.

Oversight is necessary after the investigation revealed that Governor Newsom overstated the amount of wildfire prevention work completed by his administration, falsely claiming that the land area treated was nearly eight times greater than the correct number. The report also cited the refusal by the Governor's office to respond to the findings despite multiple requests. Meanwhile, current drought conditions have amplified California's wildfire risk, leading to an earlier fire season already impacting communities statewide.

Many Senators and their constituents have been greatly affected by devastating wildfires. Therefore, it is critical that the Legislature quickly conclude budget deliberations to support current and future wildfire prevention strategies. We believe an oversight hearing is the fastest way to obtain accurate, up-to-date information from the Department of Forestry and Fire Prevention (CAL FIRE) regarding wildfire resiliency spending. Further, Legislators and the public must understand the current funding and policy implications of the Governor's misleading claims to provide the appropriate level of resources to continue preparing for future wildfire seasons.

In addition, we believe the public would be well-served in the longer term by an independent audit to understand whether CAL FIRE spends its funds most cost-effectively. While completing an audit would take too long to inform the 2021-22 wildfire budget, it would provide much-needed accountability over this critical state operation. Accordingly, we will be seeking authorization for an audit through separate channels.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jim Nielsen".

Senator Jim Nielsen  
Vice Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee  
Senator, 4th District