

KAMALA D. HARRIS
U.S. Senator for California



Wildfire Defense Act

As our country faces the climate crisis, we must speak the truth that widespread catastrophic wildfires are a growing threat to the safety of our communities. Over the past two decades alone, California has seen 15 of the 20 largest wildfires in its history, some of which have wiped out entire communities. The federal government has a responsibility to treat these wildfires with the same level of seriousness as hurricanes and other natural disasters and to empower communities to implement science-based methods for mitigating wildfire damage and defending life and property.

We cannot stop the threat of wildfires entirely, but we can do much more to prepare our communities for worst-case scenarios while working to address the structural issues that have caused these fires to burn more quickly and more intensely than ever before. In the long term, California must address its history of mismanaging fire, the expansion of residential communities into natural areas, the greed and misplaced priorities of corporations, and the pumping of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. We must also we acknowledge that not all wildfires burn in the forest. Wildfires are also burning through shrubland across Southern California and the oak woodlands that stretch across the state. In all environments, the best way to protect communities from wildfire is to focus on the communities themselves.

U.S. Senator Kamala D. Harris (D-CA) is introducing the *Wildfire Defense Act* to ensure that local communities are able to defend themselves from the growing danger of wildfires. This responsibility should not fall on any one individual, but should instead be shared among entire communities with the understanding that a threat to any one home is a threat to every neighbor.

Specifically, the *Wildfire Defense Act* will invest \$1 billion per year to:

- Establish guidelines for communities to conceptualize new Community Wildfire Defense Plans (CWDP) that are developed in coordination with community members, first responders, and relevant state agencies. CWDPs will focus on implementing strategies and activities relating to:
 - Improving evacuations and access for first responders
 - Addressing vulnerable populations, including the elderly, those with disabilities, and the homeless
 - Hardening critical infrastructure and homes
 - Applying defensible space projects to create a buffer between communities and the forest
 - Building local capacity to implement and oversee the plan
 - Deploying distributed energy resources like microgrids with battery storage
 - Implementing strategic land use planning
 - Educating community members
 - Coordinating with existing wildfire plans like a Community Wildfire Protection Plan
- Provide grants of up to \$250,000 to develop a CWDP and grants of up to \$10 million to implement a CWDP
 - Grants will be prioritized for low-income communities that are in a wildfire hazard area and communities recently impacted by a major wildfire
- Study how a CWDP could be used as certification for insurance companies assessing a community resilience.
- Complete a report on all federal authorities and programs to protect communities from wildfires.
- Continuously update wildfire hazard maps.
- Assess impediments to emergency radio communications across departments and agencies.