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Subject: WAKE UP CA Newsletter #3 - April 30, 2026
Date: Apr 30, 2026 at 8:53:30 PM
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Newsletter Number 3

Catch 22: California State Housing Policy Undermines Safety and Evacuation Planning

Advocating Affordability, Safety, and Local Accountability

RECAP • MONDAY APRIL 27

Fire & Evacuation Capacity

The intersection of mandated housing density and fire/evacuation capacity is a large part of the reason **WAKE UP** exists.

On Monday, **Marylee Guinon** and **Judith Olney** of SAFRR (the State Alliance for Firesafe Road Regulations) gave a robust presentation on established road standards for getting people out in emergencies — while still reserving space to bring in the equipment first responders need.

SAFRR works at the highest levels to bring attention to these issues — which are both ignored and misinterpreted in the state's rush to densify. They have joined with the **Federation of Hillside and Canyon Associations** to bring a lawsuit against the City of Los

Angeles for approving multiple developments in areas that cannot meet these established standards.

Using the January 2025 Palisades Fire as an example, this engaging 6-min video summarizes Los Angeles' long history of wildfire and highlights the 2025 accelerating firestorms that resulted in structure-to-structure fires and failed evacuations.

 [Watch: Palisades Fire — Lessons Learned \(6 min\) →](#)

SAFRR has shared their presentation slide deck here:

 [Download SAFRR's Presentation Slides \(PDF\) →](#)

Their frequently updated site has a deep store of resources and links:

firesaferoadregs.org →

If your community needs assistance understanding these regulations, SAFRR's community liaison, **Judith Olney**, can offer advice and a growing toolkit to help. Contact Judith at

SAFRR@FireSafeRoadRegs.org.

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CATCH 22

When the Law Doesn't Mean What It Seems To Say

Sonia Taylor, expert in the intersection of fire and housing laws, walked us through the gap between what state housing legislation

appears to say about Fire Hazard Severity Zones — and what it actually requires.

Sonia also covered evacuation laws that are on the books, but are often misunderstood or ignored by approving agencies.

 [Download Sonia Taylor's Slides \(PDF\) →](#)

RESOURCE LINKS FROM SONIA'S TALK

Evacuation Planning Manual (State)

lci.ca.gov/planning/general-plan/guidelines.html →

SB 99 (Gov Code §65302(g)(5))

[View bill text on leginfo.legislature.ca.gov](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov) →

AB 747 (Gov Code §65302.15)

[View bill text on leginfo.legislature.ca.gov](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov) →

AB 1409 (2021)

[View bill text on leginfo.legislature.ca.gov](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov) →

Berkeley Evacuation & Fire Planning

[berkeleyca.gov — fire-weather-and-evacuation](http://berkeleyca.gov/fire-weather-and-evacuation) →

CalFire Subdivision Review GIS Map

[View the interactive map](#) →

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NOTE · Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps evaluate *hazards*, not *risks*. The hazards presented by the built environment — density, proximity, and the interspersing of older wooden structures — are not currently built into the modeling.

[Learn more about Fire Hazard Severity Zones →](#)

 [Watch: *Fire on the Mountain* — how fire moves →](#)

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IN THE NEWS

Recent Coverage

LOS ANGELES TIMES • DEC 31, 2025

L.A. ignored fire safety as it permitted development in high-risk areas, suit alleges

The lawsuit, brought by SAFRR and the Federation of Hillside & Canyon Associations, provided 75 examples of building permits and other plans approved by the city that allegedly violate the state's "minimum firesafe regulations."

[Read the article →](#)

NEW YORK TIMES • JAN 17, 2025

The Homes Are the Fuel

The New York Times documents how densely built homes in fire-prone areas became the primary fuel during the January 2025 Los Angeles fires — the structure-to-structure ignition pattern that current state housing policy continues to ignore.

[Read the article →](#)

LOS ANGELES TIMES • 2019

Want to control California wildfires? Change the housing laws

This article came out in 2019, before 6th cycle RHNA pressures to over-density — when communities were reeling from catastrophic fires and real solutions to limiting future damage were actually being floated, solutions that conflict with our new housing laws and policy.

[Read the article →](#)

NEW VIDEO

"SB 79: It's Unbearable"

A four-minute *country* take on SB 79. Totally worth a watch — and a share.



[▶ Watch the video on YouTube →](#)

FREE EVENT — MAY 15

Film and Town Hall

Friday, May 15 • 6:30 to 8:00 PM

Hesse Park, Rancho Palos Verdes



If you're in the area, join us for a film screening and town hall featuring local electeds and guests, including former Torrance Councilmember **Mike Griffiths** (California Cities for Local Control)

and **Amy Kalish** of WAKE UP CALIFORNIA.

"Small Is Beautiful highlights a conflict that is neither small nor beautiful. It exposes how developers use California's affordable housing mandates as a 'Trojan Horse' to build luxury units in a critical wildlife corridor in Sonoma County. By ignoring the increasing wildfire risks of climate change, these projects threaten to turn rural landscapes into inescapable death traps for both current and future residents."

— **Jonathan Fink**, Professor of Geology, Portland State University;
Founder, Cascadia Wildfire and Urban Smoke Working Group

[Watch the trailer & learn more →](#)

ELECTION ENDORSEMENTS

Where Candidates

Stand



California Cities for Local Control has polled all Senate, Assembly, and Gubernatorial candidates. The results are at the link below. *If candidates in your area haven't filled it out, please ask them to.*

[View the candidate endorsements →](#)

[Find your incumbent legislators →](#)

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UPCOMING ZOOM • MAY 4

Housing Policy: Getting Everyone Up to Speed

Feeling like you've got some basic gaps in your understanding of what's going on? **Amy will present a demystifying**

overview, explain acronyms, and take any questions — no matter how basic.

May has a light schedule.

REGULAR ZOOMS RESUME JUNE 1ST

Thursday newsletter will continue.

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Amy Kalish

WAKE UP CALIFORNIA

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WAKE UP CALIFORNIA · Mill Valley, CA · wakeca.org

A volunteer-run California nonprofit working for housing accountability, local control, and fire & evacuation safety.

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