

## Scientific Consensus on the Fires

- Dry vegetation, high Santa Ana winds, and low humidity — plus only 1/5 of an inch of rainfall since July 2024 — explain why the Los Angeles brush fires spread so rapidly and are difficult to contain.



### What caused the California fires: How strong wind and abnormal dryness fueled the blazes in L.A.

Prolonged drought, an exceptionally dry winter and powerful Santa Ana winds set up a dangerous triple whammy of extreme conditions that have...

1 day ago



## Politicization of the Tragedy

- Political operatives are exploiting these wildfires with an “Operation Blame the Black Woman” campaign against Mayor Karen Bass, using disinformation and out-of-context claims.
- While our primary focus must remain on aiding those affected by the fires, we also need to counteract false narratives before they take root.

### L.A.'s wildfires have leaders fighting on two fronts: Nature and politics

As weather forecasts predict the resumption of dangerous winds this week, the governor, L.A. mayor and others find California under attack from Trump, conservatives and advisers.

Yesterday at 7:51 p.m. EST

9 min 1420



From left, Sen. Alex Padilla (D-California), Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass and California Gov. Gavin Newsom tour a wildfire-damaged area of the Pacific Palisades neighborhood of Los Angeles on Wednesday. (Allison Dinner/EPA-EFE/Shutterstock)

### 'Politicized crap': Ex-RNC chair shreds MAGA 'misinformation, disinformation' on LA wildfires



Former Republican National Committee Chairman Michael Steele in 2023 (Wikimedia Commons)

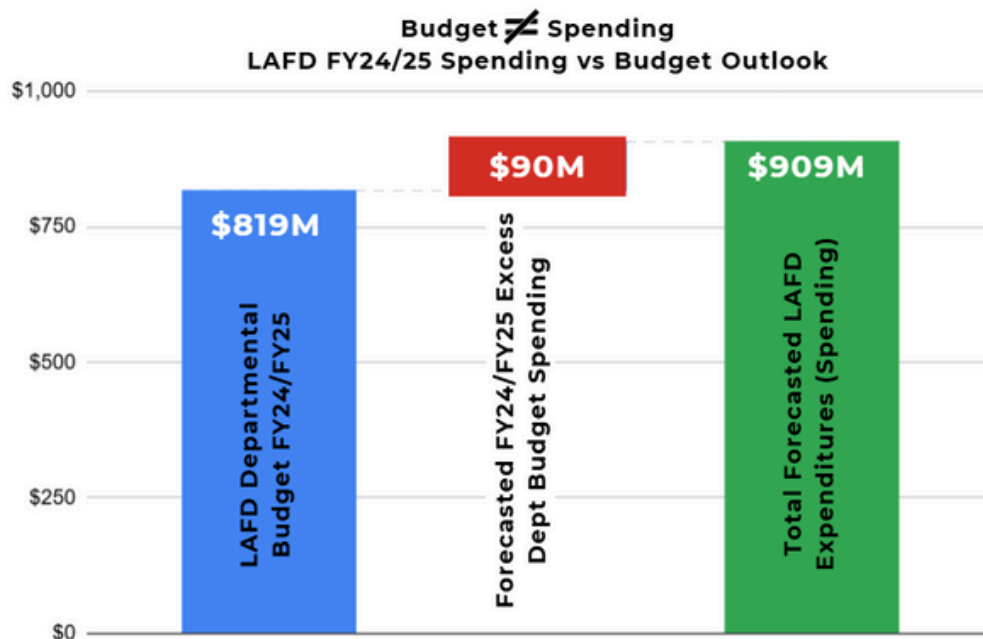
## Addressing Key Attacks on Mayor Bass

- The “\$17M was cut from the LAFD Budget.” attack leaves out that LAFD spending will far exceed the initial *departmental* budget
  - Although \$17M was cut from the *departmental* budget, \$53M was booked in separate *non-departmental budgets* to cover increased projected costs resulting from LAFD union negotiations.

Employee Union Negotiations

On November 5, 2024, the City Council approved the agreement with the United Firefighters of Los Angeles City (MOU 23). This Office estimates the direct cost of this new agreement in 2024-25 is approximately \$53.4 million and will report in a future FSR with these costs incorporated into the Fire sworn salary and overtime projections. In addition, on December 3, 2024, the City Council approved MOU 26 and 66. The City has reached a Tentative Agreement with the Municipal Construction Inspectors Association (MOU 05), which the CAO has filed with the Council for its consideration. This Office is still negotiating a successor agreement with the Los Angeles Fire Department Chief Officers' Association (MOU 22). The projections in this report do not include costs associated with these agreements, however, the 2024-25 Budget includes \$104.83 million in the Unappropriated Balance, Department Payroll Reconciliation Account to address the anticipated costs for these and other agreements that were not included in departmental 2024-25 budgets. If the actual cost of these agreements is higher than budgeted, identified overspending will increase. This Office will report in future FSRs with updates on employee union negotiations and with cost projections for any approved agreements.

- **The LAFD is projected to spend \$90M more than the FY24/25 budget for a total of \$909M.** \$53.4M of the \$90M is held in a non-LAFD departmental budget and \$36.7M in unplanned excess LAFD spending.





- “LAFD Chief Crowley wrote a 12/4 memo warning of budget cut impacts.”

Before the memo was written, the department was already projected to spend \$32M over its budget. The 12/6 City Financial Status Report projected a \$90M *departmental budget* overrun. Citing a memo about budget cuts that ignores the forecasted expenditures far beyond the cut is disingenuous.

General Fund			
Account Name	First FSR	Proposed FSR Changes	Projection Basis
<b>Surpluses (Shown as Positive, in millions)</b>			
Unused Sick Time	\$ 1.05	\$ -	Projected surplus is due to a decreased number of DROP exits compared to prior-year trends.
Overtime Constant Staffing	4.60	-	Projected surplus based on year-to-date expenditure trends.
Overtime Variable Staffing	0.70	-	Projected surplus is due to additional appropriation received from grants.
Other Surplus Accounts	0.29	-	Projected surpluses in these accounts are based on prior year and year-to-date expenditure trends.
<b>Overspending (Shown as Negative, in millions)</b>			
Salaries General	\$ (1.98)	(1.03)	Projected overspending is primarily due to unbudgeted payment obligations related to a legal settlement and costs associated with the civilian labor agreements approved last fiscal year.
Salaries Sworn	(6.33)	(5.12)	Projected overspending is due to a budget adjustment and transfer of funds to the Constant Staffing Overtime Account in the Adopted Budget.
Salaries As-Needed	(0.57)	0.10	Projected overspending is due to the increased use of as-needed staff in light of full time vacancies.
Overtime General	(1.78)	1.00	Projected overspending is due to higher than anticipated staff overtime for public safety inspections, fleet maintenance and Workday issue resolutions.
Overtime Sworn	(6.09)	-	Projected overspending is due to higher than anticipated resources deployed to wildfires and tropical storm event Helene.
Contractual Services	(12.51)	7.31	Projected overspending is due to unbudgeted contract obligations.
Field Equipment Expense	(5.71)	4.00	Projected overspending is due to increased costs of fleet parts and anticipated fireboat expenses.
Operating Supplies	(2.73)	(0.27)	Projected overspending is due to increasing demands on on-going operational supplies.
Other Overspending Accounts	(1.34)	0.25	Projected overspending is primarily due to unbudgeted costs associated with approved civilian labor agreements.
<b>General Fund Total</b>	<b>\$ (32.40)</b>	<b>\$ 6.24</b>	

- Excess spending beyond the departmental budget was due to items such as fleet maintenance, expanded wildfire deployment, and sending firefighters out of state to respond to Hurricane Helene

#### LAFD MEMBERS ON FEMA TASK FORCE HEAD EAST TO ASSIST WITH HURRICANE MILTON EFFORTS

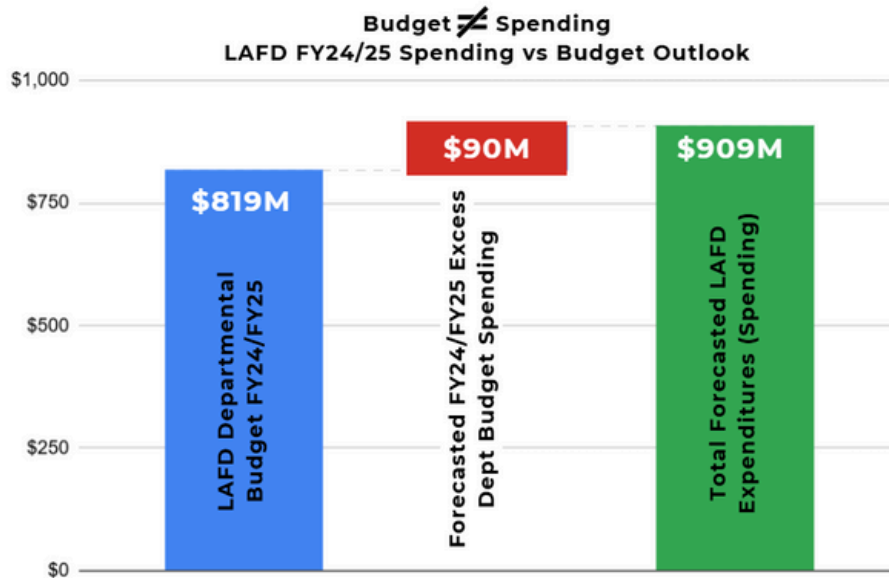
Monday, October 7, 2024

LAFD Spokesperson: Nicholas Prange

LOS ANGELES - The Los Angeles City Fire Department (LAFD) is sending forty-three members to assist with the Hurricane Milton response in the southeast, after FEMA activated the National Urban Search and Rescue Response System to request nationwide Mutual Aid as a second consecutive hurricane approaches. This group of firefighters from FEMA California Task Force 1 (CA-TF1, Urban Search and Rescue Task Force) are swift water rescue specialists who will provide technical assistance to the recovery efforts in the southeast.

Table 2. Second FSR Projected Overspending/Unfunded Expenditures (in Millions)				
Departmental and Non-Departmental Overspending				
Department	First FSR	Change	Second FSR	Reason
Fire	32.40	4.28	36.68	Overspending is primarily due to increased retirement sick payout liabilities, overtime for fire life safety inspections and deployments in response to natural disasters, unbudgeted contract obligations, and increased fleet maintenance and repair costs. Increased overspending is due to year-to-date overtime expenditures and revised projections.
Fire Sworn Labor Agreement	-	53.40	53.40	Overspending projection is related to the impact of the new labor agreement with the United Firefighters of Los Angeles City.

- “LA Controller Kenneth Mejia highlights the budget cut but ignores overspending.”
  - Controller Mejia criticizes the budget cut but does not acknowledge that forecasted expenditures exceeded the budget.
  - This omission creates the misleading impression that the department had to strictly adhere to the cut when, in reality, spending continued above the official budget.



- Interestingly, in November 2024, Mejia prominently highlighted the gap between spending and budget in discussions about homelessness. So clearly, he is aware how spending deviates from budgets.



- Although there will be a time for a legitimate conversation on budget priorities, it is disingenuous to pretend the budget cut was adhered to in practice.

## Firefighter Experts agree the wildfires are unprecedented beyond to capacity to fully prepare

- Los Angeles Fire Commission President Genethia Hudley-Hayes
  - States that even a fully funded fire department might have struggled to contain such massive fires in these extreme wind conditions.
  - Emphasizes the unprecedented nature of the phenomenon: “I don’t see how anybody could have prepared for this.” (Source: CNN)

Los Angeles Fire Commission President Genethia Hudley-Hayes said it’s “out of line” to blame any local official for the magnitude of the fires, saying the focus should be on helping the residents who have lost everything.

“You’re talking about a phenomenon that we have not seen here,” she said. “I don’t see how anybody could have prepared for this.”

- Robert Hawkins, President of the Los Angeles City Stentorians
  - Notes that he does not believe the budget impacted the department’s ability to fight the wildfires.

Robert Hawkins, president of the Los Angeles City Stentorians — which advocates for Black firemen — said he does not believe the budget impacted the department’s ability to fight the wildfires.



## [Billionaire Rick Caruso has Spent Tens of Millions to Spread Misinformation](#)

Caruso is the lone billionaire running for mayor this cycle, and he's able to self-fund his campaign (so far, he's spent around \$23-\$25 million of his own...

May 25, 2022



- Rick Caruso, who spent \$100M against Bass in the 2022 Mayoral race, is exploiting the tragedy by misleadingly citing a cut to the LAFD departmental budget without acknowledging the additional \$53M for LAFD held in a non-departmental budget account and the \$36M forecasted overspending.
- As a staunch opponent of decreasing LAPD spending and advocate of increasing funding, it is absurd to suggest that Caruso would've insisted on a less costly contract with the LAPD union (which endorsed him).

### **DON'T DEFUND THE POLICE, INVEST IN IMPROVEMENTS**

LAPD can and will do better during a Caruso administration, but we must first acknowledge that attacks on rank-and-file officers cast too wide of a net and are often misleading. The vast majority of LAPD is committed to good work that makes our city safer, often putting their safety on the line to protect Angelenos. LA is the most under-policed big city in America. We cannot stand for the misdirected slogan of "defunding the police" in a city where murders are on the rise at alarming rates and hate crimes continue to increase. We need to invest in more training, both to reduce unnecessary use of force incidents and to eliminate any elements of unconscious bias. When an emergency strikes, we *all* want our first responders to arrive quickly and to save lives. We need to foster a culture that respects and shows gratitude to our first responders, along with a constant and firm demand for integrity, fair treatment, and professionalism.

Source: Rick Caruso's campaign site

#### LOCAL NEWS

## **L.A. police union endorses Caruso for mayor over former LAPD officer Buscaino**

by: Los Angeles Times  
Posted: Feb 24, 2022 / 05:29 PM PST  
Updated: Feb 24, 2022 / 05:29 PM PST

- Caruso campaigned on hiring 1,500 more police officers and argued that crime cannot be reduced by cutting the LAPD budget. Given the city's revenue shortfall, those costs would have required an offset from other departments.



## [Mayoral candidate Rick Caruso calls for 1,500 more LAPD officers](#)

EDITOR'S NOTE: Multimedia journalist Kate Cagle spoke with Rick Caruso about his mayoral campaign promises. Click the arrow above to watch...

