



May 20, 2024

The Honorable Mike Thompson
United States House of Representatives
268 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: H.R. 6997 (LaLota) – Support/Co-Sponsor

Dear Congressman Thompson:

On behalf of the City of Santa Rosa, I am writing to ask you to support and co-sponsor H.R. 6997, the Disaster Contract Improvement Act. This important bipartisan legislation aims to improve debris removal processes and ensure post-disaster services are delivered in a timely manner.

NATALIE ROGERS
Mayor

MARK STAPP
Vice Mayor

EDDIE ALVAREZ

VICTORIA FLEMING

DIANNA MACDONALD

JEFF OKREPKIE

CHRIS ROGERS

The City of Santa Rosa is in support of this legislation. H.R. 6997 would establish an Advisory Working Group to work with FEMA on implementing procedures for debris removal contracts. If enacted, the FEMA administrator would then have one year to enact the Advisory Working Group's recommendations. A 2019 Government Accountability Report (GAO-20-5) urged FEMA "to update its policies and procedures to enhance future wildfire response and recover efforts." The GAO report also noted that FEMA's contracts for debris removal in prior wildfire seasons was focused on hurricane disasters – not wildfires.

As you know, following the 2017 Wildfires in Sonoma and Napa Counties, including the Tubbs and Nuns Fires, there was an immense effort to work with our federal and state partners on debris removal. The City of Santa Rosa implemented the Government-Sponsored Debris Removal Program that destroyed 5,300 homes in Sonoma County alone. The City worked closely with FEMA, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, US EPA and CalOES through the development, implementation and completion of the program.

In 2020, the City of Santa Rosa worked with CalOES, FEMA, CalEPA and DTSC on the Consolidated Debris Removal Program following the Glass Fire which destroyed 1,528 homes in the City of Santa Rosa and throughout the counties of Sonoma and Napa.

Based on experience with debris removal at a local, state and federal levels, City of Santa Rosa staff have provided resources to communities that include Butte County, CA (Camp Fire 2018); Boulder County, CO (Marshall Fire 2022); City of Medford, OR (multiple fires in Jackson County, Talent and Phoenix 2020); State of Texas Emergency Management (Panhhandle Wildfires 2024), Maui County, HI (August 2023 Wildfires). We stand ready to



support other efforts to reform the contracting process and debris removal protocols to ensure communities are able to rebuild in a timely manner.

Thank you for considering our request to support this legislation. We appreciate your long-standing support with our efforts to rebuild after our wildfires.

Sincerely,

Natalie Rogers
Mayor

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Mayor

MARK STAPP
Vice Mayor

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VICTORIA FLEMING
DIANNA MACDONALD
JEFF OKREPKE
CHRIS ROGERS