

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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Chris Parlier..... District 2
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Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
Kern County Administrative Center
1115 Truxtun Avenue, 5th Floor
Bakersfield, California 93301
Telephone (661) 868-3585
TTY Relay 800-735-2929

February 18, 2026

The Honorable Thomas Umberg
Chair, Senate Judiciary Committee
1021 O Street, Room 3240
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SB 982 (Wiener), Climate Disaster Civil Actions – OPPOSE

Dear Senator Umberg,

On behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors, I write to respectfully express our opposition to SB 982 (Wiener). While we recognize and share the Legislature's concern regarding the increasing impacts of natural disasters and the instability of California's property insurance market, we remain concerned that the litigation-based framework proposed in SB 982 would create significant legal uncertainty, economic disruption, and unintended consequences for local governments and communities without addressing the underlying structural drivers of these challenges.

Kern County is uniquely positioned within California's economy as a major energy-producing region and as a local government responsible for disaster response, public safety, infrastructure maintenance, and supporting economic stability for working families. Policies that introduce broad and retroactive liability structures affecting key sectors of the economy must be carefully evaluated to ensure they do not unintentionally undermine affordability, employment opportunities, or the fiscal stability of local jurisdictions.

SB 982 represents a significant shift from prior legislative proposals by centralizing enforcement authority within the Office of the Attorney General and establishing a statutory strict liability framework for designated "responsible parties." While the bill narrows enforcement mechanisms by removing certain private causes of action, it simultaneously expands state enforcement authority and lowers traditional legal thresholds by imposing strict liability for broadly defined "climate-attributable damage." From a public policy perspective, this approach raises concerns regarding fairness, predictability, and the role of courts in resolving complex global issues traditionally addressed through legislative and regulatory processes.

The bill's focus on insurance market impacts reflects an important policy discussion; however, we are concerned that the proposed liability framework oversimplifies the causes of California's insurance challenges. Insurance instability is driven by multiple interconnected factors, including wildfire risk

management, land use policies, regulatory structures, construction costs, and global reinsurance markets. Assigning statutory strict liability to a single sector of the economy risks creating additional uncertainty without necessarily improving market stability or affordability for policyholders.

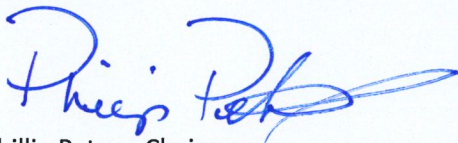
Additionally, SB 982 establishes the Attorney General Climate Disaster Fund, directing monetary recoveries into a dedicated enforcement account. While intended to support investigations and enforcement activities, this structure may unintentionally incentivize prolonged litigation rather than collaborative or preventative approaches focused on mitigation, resilience investments, and long-term risk reduction strategies.

We also note that the bill's reliance on retroactive liability concepts and expansive statutory definitions may raise ongoing legal and constitutional questions, potentially resulting in prolonged litigation that delays meaningful relief for Californians affected by natural disasters. Such outcomes could delay policy certainty while imposing costs on communities, employers, and local governments that rely on stable economic conditions.

Kern County remains committed to supporting balanced, forward-looking policies that enhance resilience, improve insurance market stability, and maintain a predictable legal framework for California residents and businesses. We respectfully urge the Committee to carefully evaluate whether the statutory strict liability model proposed in SB 982 represents the most effective or legally sustainable approach to addressing natural disasters and insurance challenges facing our state.

For these reasons, the Kern County Board of Supervisors respectfully **opposes SB 982**.

Sincerely,



Phillip Peters, Chairman
Kern County Board of Supervisors

cc: Honorable Members, Senate Judiciary Committee
Honorable Members, Kern Legislative Delegation
Shaw Yoder Antwih Schmelzer & Lange

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February 18, 2026

The Honorable Steve Padilla
Chair, Senate Insurance Committee
1020 N Street, Room 258
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SB 982 (Wiener), Climate Disaster Civil Actions – OPPOSE

Dear Senator Padilla,

On behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors, I write to respectfully express our opposition to SB 982 (Wiener). While we recognize and share the Legislature's concern regarding the increasing impacts of natural disasters and the instability of California's property insurance market, we remain concerned that the litigation-based framework proposed in SB 982 would create significant legal uncertainty, economic disruption, and unintended consequences for local governments and communities without addressing the underlying structural drivers of these challenges.

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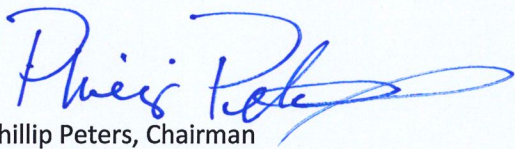
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Phillip Peters, Chairman
Kern County Board of Supervisors

cc: Honorable Members, Senate Insurance Committee
Honorable Members, Kern Legislative Delegation
Shaw Yoder Antwih Schmelzer & Lange