

# BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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August 11, 2026

Senate President pro Tempore Monique Limón  
1021 O Street, Suite 8518  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Speaker of the Assembly, Robert Rivas  
1021 O Street, Suite 8330  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Request for immediate legislative action on goat herder wage standards and impacts on wildfire mitigation efforts**

Dear pro Tem Limón and Speaker Rivas,

I am writing on behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors to urge immediate legislative action to address an emerging statewide crisis affecting California's wildfire prevention capacity due to the State's current wage interpretation for goat herders and its resulting impact on prescribed grazing operations.

Targeted grazing by goats has become one of the most effective and environmentally responsible methods for reducing hazardous vegetation in areas too steep, remote, or rugged for machinery or hand crews. State agencies, including Cal Fire and the Governor's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force, recognize prescribed goat grazing as an essential tool for wildfire mitigation and long-term landscape resilience.

However, recent changes to California's wage requirements for goat herders now threaten the continued viability of these operations. Although a UC Davis study completed in 2026<sup>1</sup> confirmed that goat herding and sheep herding constitute substantially the same work, wage parity between the two professions has not been maintained. As of July 1, 2026, H-2A sheep herders and goat herders earned roughly \$58,000 annually, including housing, food, and transportation. Under the State's new wage interpretation, goat herder compensation is projected to increase to an estimated \$240,000 annually beginning in August, while wages for sheep herders would remain unchanged.

Because prescribed grazing operations typically rely on mixed groups of sheep and goats, this inconsistent wage structure creates an impossible financial burden for grazing providers. Without legislative correction, operators will be forced to reduce or eliminate services entirely. The resulting loss of targeted grazing capacity would severely compromise California's wildfire resilience efforts at the very moment our state faces increasingly frequent and destructive fires.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dir.ca.gov/Reports/California-Shepherders-and-Goat-Herders-SB-143-Study.pdf>

We respectfully request that the Legislature act swiftly to restore wage parity and provide clarity so grazing operators can continue delivering this vital public safety service. Failure to address this issue will directly reduce statewide fire-mitigation capacity, increase vegetation fuel loads, and place communities, particularly those in high-risk wildfire zones, at heightened danger.

Thank you for your consideration and your continued commitment to protecting California's communities and natural landscapes. Kern stands ready to support efforts to resolve this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Phillip Peters, Chairman  
Kern County Board of Supervisors

Attachment

cc: The Honorable Gavin Newsom, Governor of California  
Honorable Members, Kern Legislative Delegation  
Joe Tyler, Director Cal Fire  
Kern County Fire Department  
Shaw Yoder Antwih Schmelzer & Lange