

# California governor makes significant concessions to corporate interests in rebuilding wildfire-hit areas

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Democratic California Governor Gavin Newsom has once again revealed his true allegiance—not to working people, nor to environmental protection, but to corporate interests.

His latest executive order, which suspends California’s landmark environmental regulations to fast-track utility infrastructure rebuilding in wildfire-affected areas, is a direct attack on democracy, environmental safeguards and working class communities. It is a measure that aligns perfectly with the interests of private energy corporations like Southern California Edison (SCE) while dangerously mirroring the authoritarian methods of the fascistic Trump administration.

Newsom’s executive order exempts utility companies from compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the California Coastal Act, two of the state’s most critical environmental protections.

The CEQA was designed to ensure that development projects account for their environmental impact, requiring mitigation strategies that protect public health and ecosystems. Similarly, the Coastal Act was established to prevent reckless development that could harm California’s fragile coastal regions.

Under the guise of expediting recovery in the fire-ravaged regions of Altadena, Malibu, and Pacific Palisades, Newsom has essentially given large corporations and private equity firms the green light to act with impunity, prioritizing profit over the environment and public safety.

This decision did not emerge in a vacuum. In fact, Newsom has repeatedly made concessions that allow large corporations to operate without restriction. In the

aftermath of the devastating Camp Fire in 2018, he helped push through legislation that enabled PG&E to exit bankruptcy, shifting the burden of its liabilities onto ratepayers. Now his executive order follows sustained pressure from SCE and other energy companies, which have been lobbying for a relaxation of regulatory requirements in the name of cost-cutting and “efficiency.”

That Newsom would comply so readily only underscores the reality that his administration, like its Republican counterparts, serves the interests of capital. This is made worse by emerging evidence of SCE’s negligence and Democrats’ complicity in the January fires.

Environmental advocates have raised the alarm over the potential ramifications of Newsom’s order. A week earlier, Shaye Wolf, climate science director for the Center for Biological Diversity, warned: “Gov. Newsom should reject the Trump approach of logging and rolling back critical environmental protections.”

Bruce Reznik, an environmentalist and advocate for sustainable development at Los Angeles Waterkeeper, warned, “We have to build recognizing the reality of today’s climate change. These laws play a really critical role in making sure as we rebuild we’re doing it with an eye toward climate resilience. Unfortunately, that hasn’t been the way the governor has operated, and you have to worry about what that will mean.”

Similarly, Susan Jordan, director of the California Coastal Protection Network, stated, “I hope that the governor will one day recognize that the Coastal Commission is a willing partner and one of the best tools he has in his toolbox to ensure a quick, informed and coordinated response to establish future long-term

resiliency along the coast.”

Beyond its corporate-serving function, Newsom’s executive order represents a blatant abuse of executive authority. The decision to bypass California’s environmental laws mirrors Trump’s authoritarian use of executive power to dismantle federal environmental regulations, suppress democratic and workers’ rights, and shield corporations from legal scrutiny.

In both cases, executive authority bypasses legislative power and is being wielded not to serve the public good, but to eliminate any legal constraints on powerful industries. By following this model, Newsom is normalizing a dangerous precedent—one in which governors can override long-standing protections at will, without accountability to the public or the legislature.

Furthermore, this development is a clear capitulation to Trump’s fascistic agenda. Trump repeatedly targeted California’s environmental protections, even calling for the defunding of the California Coastal Commission, which is responsible for enforcing the Coastal Act.

Despite Newsom’s rhetoric about “resilient rebuilding” and “future fire prevention,” the reality is far more sinister. By gutting CEQA and the Coastal Act, he is paving the way for reckless infrastructure projects that will have devastating consequences for California’s environment and building safety.

CEQA and the Coastal Act were created to prevent—at least to some extent—harmful and shortsighted development. Without these protections, there will be no meaningful oversight to ensure that the rebuilding process is done in a way that prioritizes sustainability. Instead, utilities will take the cheapest, fastest routes, cutting corners and disregarding long-term environmental risks. This decision could lead to increased pollution, weakened coastal protections, and more infrastructure failures down the line.

Newsom’s order also fails to acknowledge one of the principal root causes of these devastating wildfires: the climate crisis, exacerbated by corporate greed and decades of environmental negligence. Rather than taking decisive action to curb emissions and hold energy companies accountable for their role in California’s escalating fire disasters, Newsom is enabling further destruction.

This executive order is not an isolated incident—it is part of a broader pattern of Newsom’s willingness to

appease corporate power and his supposed political adversaries. Newsom has previously engaged in public displays of deference to Trump, whether during the former president’s visits to California or Newsom’s own trips to Washington D.C.

This executive order is a stark reminder that both the Democratic and Republican parties ultimately serve the interests of the capitalist ruling elite. While Newsom postures as a progressive leader, his actions reveal him to be no different from his Republican counterparts who prioritize deregulation, corporate power, and executive overreach.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* has noted, the task of rebuilding Los Angeles cannot be entrusted to politicians who have proven their subordination to corporate interests. Newsom’s concessions to companies like SCE are well documented. Nor can it be entrusted to figures like billionaire Rick Caruso, who will do everything in their power to cut through any and all restrictions to their ability to turn a disaster into an unprecedented opportunity for profit.

The task must be taken up by the working class on the basis of a social plan that scientifically proceeds to protect the population, the environment, and the future while preventing disasters like the Los Angeles fires from recurring. Only through a mobilization of workers, independent of the Democratic and Republican parties, on the basis of a socialist program can a genuine effort be made to rebuild in a way that prioritizes human lives over corporate wealth.

The profit motive must be removed from disaster recovery efforts, and power must be placed in the hands of those who have the greatest stake in ensuring a safe and sustainable future—the workers, scientists, and community members who truly understand the urgency of protecting both people and the environment.



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