

California State Senate

SENATOR
RICHARD D. ROTH
THIRTY-FIRST DISTRICT



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December 10, 2019

Marybel Batjer, President
California Public Utilities Commission
505 Van Ness Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102

Re: Consideration of Wildfires in Riverside Transmission Reliability Project, Proceeding A1504013

Dear President Batjer,

Our news cycle has been dominated by the very serious issue of wildfires throughout the state of California. This situation will only continue to worsen year after year as climate change creates weather patterns ripe for fire danger, including unpredictable rainfall, prolonged periods of drought, variable winds, and longer, hotter summers. In the last few years, we have seen tragedy strike both in Northern and Southern California. Families are forced to flee in the middle of the night, often without warning, to watch as fire destroys their homes, their belongings, and their communities.

This reality struck home most acutely this year when two separate fire incidents occurred in Senate District 31 - the Hill Fire and 46 Fire in Jurupa Valley. While certainly not similar in magnitude or destruction to some of the fires in Northern California, the magnitude for and impact on our communities in Riverside County cannot be overlooked. Residents were forced to flee, schools were evacuated, air quality plummeted, and daily life was disrupted. These events were shocking reminders that even in areas not thought to be rural, fires can and do occur.

While causes for many of these fires remain under investigation, the most intense scrutiny is given to various utilities, their equipment, and need for vegetation management. As you are aware, high voltage overhead transmission lines present a severe fire danger, especially when combined with adverse weather events, and preventative measures must be taken so that we may avoid the more tragedy. The short-term solution this year focused on public safety power shutoffs, which was not effectively implemented, often leading to confusion, anger, and disaster

for many communities. The long-term solution must focus on alternative strategies for utilities to combat the potential fire danger that their equipment poses in communities across the state.

There is a current pending proceeding in front of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), Proceeding A1504013, which has a direct nexus to this issue. The Riverside Transmission Reliability Project (RTRP) proposes a second transmission line by which Riverside Public Utility and Southern California Edison could provide reliable energy to residents of Senate District 31; there is currently only one transmission line. As part of the proceeding, there is a deliberation of undergrounding an additional portion of this proposed transmission line within the City of Jurupa Valley. While there are myriad factors to consider when rendering a decision, including the consideration of the recommendation from the Administrative Law Judge, I do strongly encourage your consideration of potential for wildfire impacts.

The constituents in Senate District 31, especially Jurupa Valley, have experienced the frightening realities of wildfires in their community. We, as leaders, should ensure that we take appropriate steps to mitigate the potential for future impacts. The general issue before the CPUC about how the state addresses utilities with respect to wildfires is one that will not be addressed with a singular solution. But it is a concern that we must tackle head on and in collaboration. I respectfully ask that you take our experiences, and the experiences throughout the state, into consideration as you issue a final ruling on the RTRP (Proceeding A1504013).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard D. Roth', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Richard D. Roth
Senator, Senate District 31

Cc: Liane M. Randolph, Commissioner, California Public Utilities Commission