



For Immediate Release
February 17, 2026

Contact: comms@megafire.org

Landmark Legislation to Create a Fire Innovation Unit Introduced by Senator Henry Stern
Building on CAL FIRE's innovation, SB 1079 will create programs that use clear data and technology to prevent megafires

Sacramento, CA - Senate Bill 1079, introduced today by Senators Henry Stern (D-Los Angeles), Ben Allen (D-Malibu), and Josh Becker (D-Menlo Park) with Assembly Coauthors Jacqui Irwin (D-Thousand Oaks), Steve Bennett (D-Oxnard), Cottie Petrie-Norris (D-Irvine), and Chris Rogers (D-Ukiah). Sponsored by [Megafire Action](#) in collaboration with [FireWERX](#), SB 1079 brings wildfire innovations to firefighters to help prevent future megafires in California. Building on Governor Newsom's leadership in providing cutting-edge technologies to our frontline personnel, this bill would create a new Fire Innovation Unit (FIU) within CAL FIRE to give California a formal mechanism to identify firefighter needs, source technologies, prototype solutions, and move successful technologies from pilot to scale across three programs. By strengthening innovation to address fast fire suppression, community risk reduction, ecosystem resilience, and ignition reduction, the FIU will enhance CAL FIRE's ability to address a complex wildfire landscape and prevent future catastrophic fires in the region.

"California wildfires are becoming more destructive and deadlier with extreme weather, as so many Angelenos experienced firsthand last year. It is critical we prioritize programs with innovative technology and research that keep our communities safer for generations to come" **said Senator Henry Stern**. "SB 1079 will implement state-of-the-art programs to strengthen California's wildfire strategy to make our communities safer and more resilient, and I look forward to working with my colleagues and partners in the coming months to implement leading policies like SB 1079."

SB 1079 will establish three dedicated programs within the FIU led by a new Deputy Director of Wildfire Innovation to support the evaluation, coordination, and rapid deployment of wildfire technologies:

1. ***The existing Office of Wildfire Technology Research and Development (OWTRD)*** will come under the FIU to evaluate emerging wildfire technologies through lab and field testing and recommend standards for adoption, ensuring new tools are proven effective and ready for use.
2. ***The Innovation Outreach and Coordination program (IOC)*** will connect technologists with frontline personnel while coordinating field demonstrations with partners so innovations are informed by the needs of real-world firefighters.
3. ***The Rapid Acquisition and Deployment Program (FRAD)*** will accelerate pilots and statewide deployment through flexible contracting pathways, allowing effective technologies to reach the field faster.

“Wildfires are growing in intensity and severity, and if we continue doing things the way we always have, we should expect the same devastating outcomes,” **said Chris Anthony, Founder and CEO of FireWERX.** “The Fire Innovation Unit creates a formal pathway to identify real operational needs, co-develop solutions with firefighters, rigorously evaluate them, and move the best tools from pilot to statewide deployment.”

Wildfires don’t respect boundaries between state and federal lands. California’s Fire Innovation Unit will work seamlessly with the proposed federal [Fire Innovation Unit](#) championed by Rep. Young Kim (R–CA), Rep. Jason Crow (D–CO), Sen. Ben Ray Lujan (D–NM), and Sen. John Curtis (R–UT). Alignment between state and federal efforts will ensure innovation moves at the speed of fire, not the speed of bureaucracy.

“We are proud to partner with Senator Stern and FireWERX on a program designed to solve real, on-the-ground problems with end users at the table from day one,” **said Eric Horne, Megafire Action’s California Director.** “This effort will not only strengthen CAL FIRE’s core suppression mission, it will also accelerate the development and deployment of new technologies that help homeowners reduce risk and build safer, more resilient communities.”