



August 6, 2026

The Hon. Gavin Newsom, Governor  
State of California  
1021 O Street, Suite 9000  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Hon. John Laird, Chair  
California Senate Budget Committee  
1020 N Street, Room 502  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Hon. Robert Rivas, Speaker  
California Assembly  
1021 O Street, Suite 8330  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Hon. Monique Limon,  
President pro Tempore  
1021 O Street, Suite 8518  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Hon. Jesse Gabriel, Chair  
California Assembly Budget Committee  
1021 O Street, Suite 8230  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom, Speaker Rivas, President pro Tempore Limon, Assembly Budget Committee Chair Gabriel, and Senate Budget Committee Chair Laird:

On behalf of the undersigned agricultural, environmental, local government, firefighting, climate, and environmental justice organizations, we write to request your support for maintaining wage parity for sheep and goat herders in California, which is necessary to maintain the wildfire risk reduction services goats provide throughout the state.

The Legislature passed SB 143 in 2023, including Section 20, which amended Labor Code Section 2695.4 to clarify that the same minimum monthly wage and labor protections for sheep herders should apply to goat herders and herders caring for both types of animals. However, SB 143 also included a sunset provision that terminated this parity on July 1, 2026 and directed the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) to report to the Legislature by January 1, 2026 on the employment of sheep and goat herders.

The [DIR report](#) was published on March 30, 2026, and finds that **“Stakeholders [ranchers, herders, and worker advocates] agreed that the same alternative minimum monthly wage should apply to sheep and goat herders** because the workers and work are similar and often overlap.”

**We request the legislature and administration work together to maintain sheep and goat herder wage parity and worker protections by restoring the language applicable to goat herders that expired on July 1, 2026.** Failure to do so will result in the sale or slaughter of tens of thousands of sheep and goats and the loss of the weed abatement and wildfire fuels reductions services they provide in California.

### **Additional Background**

For the prior quarter century, California wage-and-hour law allowed livestock producers to pay a minimum monthly wage for herders because counting their hours as if they were working twenty four hours a day, seven days a week would have resulted in uneconomically high compensation for these employees, rendering sheep and goat production in California economically impractical. The Legislature recognized that herders work intermittently throughout the day and accordingly provided for the minimum monthly wage.

When AB 1066 (Gonzalez, 2016), legislation requiring payment of daily and weekly overtime to agricultural employees, was phasing in, DIR realized that existing regulations (Section 4(e) of Wage Order 14) included specific reference to sheep but not goats. DIR interpreted this omission to mean that goat herders were not covered by the same minimum monthly wage as sheep herders. DIR's interpretation created an outcome where goat herders would have to be paid nearly four times the \$4938 minimum monthly wage for sheep herders.

Had the Legislature not provided parity for minimum monthly wages for sheep and goat herders through SB 143 in 2023, their employers would have faced an unworkable situation. Both sheep and goats would have become unavailable for the increasingly popular practice of prescribed grazing for wildfire fuels reduction (as an alternative to pesticides and fossil-fuel powered machinery). This would have become economically impossible as no homeowners' association, fire safe council, local park, or utility could afford to pay for grazing services at the prices high wages for goat herders would require.

Since SB 143 was passed in 2023, the legislature and administration have recognized the benefits of prescribed grazing in multiple ways. In 2024, the administration published [nature-based climate solutions targets](#), which included prescribed grazing. Later that year, the legislature unanimously passed and the Governor signed [SB 675](#) (Limón), which required prescribed grazing to be incorporated into the state's wildfire resilience strategy. In 2025, the Task Force established a Prescribed Grazing Work Group, which published a brief on [expanding prescribed grazing for wildfire resilience in California](#).

The Department of Industrial Relations delivered its required report on March 30, 2026, which found no significant abuse or mistreatment of sheep and goat herders. It also did not document any objections from herders or farmworker advocates for continuation of wage parity for sheep and goat herders. Unfortunately, the late timing of the delivery of the report left the Legislature little time to deal with the July 1, 2026 sunset on wage parity and the goat herder language expired as of that date.

We urge you to act expeditiously to ensure ongoing parity between the wages of sheep and goat herders, and the continuing availability of sheep and goats for wildfire fuels reduction, by restoring the language applicable to goat herders that expired on July 1, 2026.

Thank you,

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Policy Director  
California Climate and Agriculture Network

Jordan Wells  
Legislative Advocate  
California State Association of Counties

Staci Heaton  
Senior Policy Advocate  
Rural County Representatives of California

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Goat Grazing

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Capra Environmental Services, Corp.

Tim Arrowsmith  
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Blue Tent Farm dba Western Grazers

Brian Allen & Daniel Allen  
Owners  
Green Goat Landscapers

Cole Bush  
Owner  
Shepherdess Land and Livestock Co. &  
Grazing School of the West

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Marinview Community Association Board  
Mill Valley, California

Wendy Millet  
Ranch Director  
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Natasha Hunt  
Alcalde Ranch  
Coalinga, California

Clayton Hodges  
Owner  
Paradise Grazing Company

James Kasper  
Private Landowner in Marin County

Ryan Indart  
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Indart Group, Inc.

John Campbell  
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San Domenico School

Sarah Keiser  
CEO  
Wild Oat Hollow

Patti Wick  
2017 Tubbs Fire Survivor  
Santa Rosa, CA

Beth Reynolds  
Owner/operator  
The Goat Girls LLC

Cc: The Hon. Karen Ross, Secretary, Department of Food and Agriculture  
The Hon. Stewart Knox, Secretary, Labor & Workforce Development Agency  
The Hon. David J. Tangipa, Vice Chair, Assembly Budget Committee  
The Hon. Roger Niello, Vice Chair, Senate Budget Committee