



ERIK NASARENKO

VENTURA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

NEWS RELEASE



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Contact: Joey Buttitta
Title: Communications Manager/PIO
Phone: (805) 767-3400
Email: Joey.Buttitta@ventura.org

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District Attorney Erik Nasarenko Joins Lawmakers to Announce Proposed Legislation Strengthening Penalties for Looting



VENTURA, Calif. – Today, Los Angeles County District Attorney Nathan J. Hochman and Ventura County District Attorney Erik Nasarenko joined Assemblymember Jesse Gabriel, Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin, and other California lawmakers to announce the introduction of Assembly Bill (AB) 469, bipartisan legislation aimed at providing law enforcement with stronger tools to combat looting and the impersonation of emergency personnel during wildfires and other disasters.

"In times of crisis, when families are at their most vulnerable, looters prey on devastation and despair," District Attorney Nasarenko said. "This legislation strengthens protections for disaster victims by ensuring harsher penalties for those who exploit emergencies for personal gain. By increasing accountability and closing loopholes, we are sending a clear message—those who take advantage of tragedy will face serious consequences."

AB 469 responds to a troubling rise in criminal activity targeting mandatory evacuation areas and communities devastated by recent wildfires, including the Palisades and Eaton fires. The proposed legislation enhances penalties for those who exploit emergencies for personal gain, closes existing

legal loopholes that can hinder prosecution, and strengthens protections for communities during the recovery and rebuilding process.

“Individuals who put our firefighters at risk and prey on communities when they are at their most vulnerable must be held accountable,” Assemblymember Gabriel said. “Looters – particularly those who impersonate emergency personnel – create chaos and confusion, endanger residents and first responders, undermine public trust in evacuation orders, divert critical emergency resources, and victimize communities that already have suffered unimaginable harm. This legislation will provide law enforcement with better tools to crack down on looting and impersonation and encourage criminals to think twice before engaging in such egregious conduct.”

The bill has been developed in close collaboration with firefighters and law enforcement professionals and is supported by the California Professional Firefighters, the California District Attorneys Association, the California Police Chiefs Association, Ventura County District Attorney Erik Nasarenko, Los Angeles County District Attorney Nathan J. Hochman, Los Angeles County Sheriff Robert G. Luna, and Los Angeles County Supervisor Kathryn Barger.

AB 469 would better protect Californians impacted by natural disasters by:

- Allowing prosecutors to seek stronger penalties for looting;
- Allowing prosecutors to seek stronger penalties for impersonating emergency personnel, including peace officers, firefighters, emergency medical personnel, US Armed Forces, California National Guard, utility workers, and government officials;
- Closing existing loopholes to better protect damaged structures as well as vehicles in mandatory evacuation zones;
- Ensuring protections continue beyond the active disaster and through the recovery and rebuilding process; and
- Ensuring those who are suspected of looting or impersonating emergency personnel are taken into custody (i.e., no citation and release).

The Ventura County District Attorney’s Office remains committed to advocating for laws that enhance public safety, support first responders, and protect communities from those who seek to capitalize on disaster-related hardship.

More Information: Office of Assemblymember Jesse Gabriel
Judith.Gutierrez@asm.ca.gov
(323) 534-9800

Watch the announcement news conference: <https://youtu.be/Kyo-F27cfis>