Board of Supervisors
COUNTY OF TEHAMA

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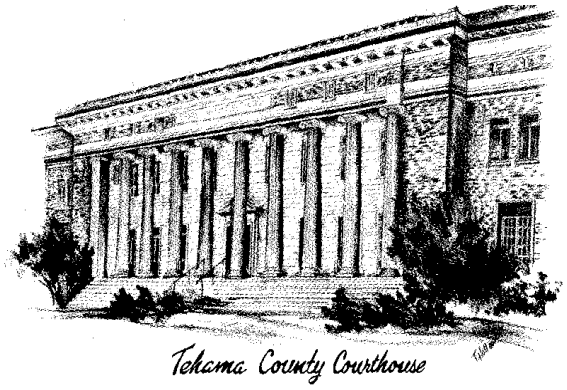

Gabriel Hydrick
Chief Administrator

July 21, 2026

The Honorable Robert Rivas
Speaker of the California State Assembly
1021 O Street, Suite 8330
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support for Permanent Sheep/Goat Herder Wage Parity in the August Budget Trailer Bill

Dear Speaker Rivas,

Tehama County is in strong support of restoring permanent wage parity for range goat herders in the August budget trailer bill. Targeted goat grazing is a practical, proven wildfire-fuel reduction tool used by public agencies, utilities, water districts, municipalities, and homeowners to clear steep, rocky, and highly flammable terrain that machines and crews often cannot safely or affordably reach.

On July 1, 2026, the temporary SB 143 parity provision expired. As a result, a 24/7 on-call range goat herder now faces a minimum lawful wage of roughly $20,000 per month, while the same worker performing the same range-herding work with sheep is paid under the alternative monthly minimum wage of $4,938. That four-fold difference is not based on different duties, different workers, or different protections; it is the result of an unresolved drafting oversight.

California cannot afford to let this oversight eliminate a wildfire-prevention industry during fire season. Grazing operators already provide required food, housing, transportation, and other support for herders. No business can absorb a $240,000 annual wage obligation per herder, plus those costs, and continue providing affordable fuel-reduction services. If the gap remains, many projects will be cancelled, fuel breaks will go untreated, and communities will face greater wildfire risk.

The Department of Industrial Relations' SB 143 study confirms the policy basis for action: stakeholders agreed that the minimum monthly wage should be the same for sheep and goat herders because the work is similar and often overlaps. Restoring parity protects workers while preserving a critical vegetation-management tool. This is not a request for a subsidy or a rollback of labor protections; it is a request to apply the same wage rule to the same work.

Tehama County respectfully urges you to include language in the August budget trailer bill to: (1) permanently amend Labor Code sections 2695.1–2695.4 so range goat herders are paid at the same alternative monthly minimum wage as range sheep herders; (2) make the fix retroactive to July 1, 2026, to prevent liability created by the legislative gap; and (3) direct the Department of Industrial Relations to implement the parity rate immediately upon enactment.

Equal work should mean equal wage, regardless of whether the herd is sheep or goats. Please act now to preserve targeted grazing as wildfire-prevention infrastructure for California communities.

Respectfully,

Tom Walker
Chairman of the Board

Cc: Governor Gavin Newsom
Senate President pro Tempore Monique Limón