



February Recap from Assemblymember Damon Connolly

Dear Friends,

It's hard to believe two months have passed since I started as the North Bay's new State Assemblymember, and a lot has happened! I'm excited to share important developments as well as updates from my office. These weeks have been filled with work launching a new committee I'll be chairing, holding oversight hearings on the recent utility bill price increases, finalizing this year's bill package, and planning some exciting upcoming events in the district. As my *second* official newsletter we'll cover these updates and more.

I want to thank you all for your continued support and engagement with my office. Everyday, I receive and read dozens of emails from residents who highlight important local issues, provide input on legislation, and communicate innovative ideas. It's truly a privilege to represent such a passionate community. I look forward to the great things we'll accomplish together this year, and beyond.

AD 12 Updates

Wildfire Prevention Committee

Investigating Utility Price
Spikes

Final Bill Package

Honoring the Legacy of Carol
Singer Peltz

Upcoming Events

Select Committee on Wildfire Prevention

Select committees are temporary committees created with a timeline to complete a specific task, like investigating issues that have an immediate impact on the State. These committees are extremely helpful in providing a hyper focused approach to a specific issue. At the start of every legislative session (which spans two years), each Assemblymember has the opportunity to write a letter to the Speaker requesting the creation or re-establishment of a select committee that they want to chair/run. Coming in as a freshman Legislator, I looked at the list of select committees and was surprised to find that there were *no* select committees examining wildfire issues. As the North Bay's new representative in Sacramento, I wrote the Assembly Speaker a letter with one request:

Establish a Select Committee on Wildfire Prevention.

Freshman legislators don't usually get the opportunity to chair a committee, let alone have one created at their request. That's why I'm particularly thrilled to share that Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon has appointed me Chair of the *newly created* Select Committee on Wildfire Prevention. Acknowledging the salience of wildfire issues and their impact on the North Bay, the Assembly's leadership has provided us with a great

Select Committee on Wildfire Prevention

Assemblymember Damon Connolly, Chair

Select Committee on Wine

Assemblymember Cecilia Aguiar-Curry, Chair

Select Committee on Workforce Development and Diversity in the Innovation Economy

Assemblymember Evan Low, Chair

Select Committee on Youth Homelessness in San Bernardino County

Assemblymember James Ramos, Chair

Sincerely,

ANTHONY RENDON
Speaker of the Assembly

opportunity to focus on this critical issue with an emphasis on prevention efforts, which are too often overlooked.

I'm looking forward to chairing this important committee and establishing hearings based on the feedback and ideas from folks in our community - the people who know wildfire issues best. The Select Committee on Wildfire Prevention will be providing oversight on wildfire funds to ensure we are allocating taxpayer dollars responsibly, examining vegetation management and responsible ecological practices, hearing about innovative new technological improvements, and more.

As always, my door is open and my staff are available if you have questions, comments, or ideas about the committee. I look forward to working with all of you!

Investigating Utility Bill Price Spikes

Over the past several weeks, households in the North Bay, including my own, got slammed with egregiously high utility bills. I wanted to take this opportunity to provide an update on this situation, recent investigatory hearings on energy prices, and the utility bill relief available through the State. I hope the information and links provided are helpful to you and your family.

Why Did Energy Bills Get So Expensive?

The sudden utility bill price increase is tied to the recent spike in the cost of natural gas. Because sections of the U.S. pipeline system had to undergo repairs while natural gas exports from Europe decreased due to the war in Ukraine, energy supplies were constrained and prices shot up. As we've all noticed, the weather has also been particularly cold, which increased the statewide demand for heating during a period where natural gas supplies were low. As a result, energy prices skyrocketed more than 300 percent (from last year), which drove the price of our utility bills up. Thankfully, most pressures on the market have reportedly been alleviated, so we should expect a steep drop in the cost of our next utility bill.

Utilities And Energy: Hearing on Energy Affordability

As a member of the Assembly Utilities and Energy Committee, my colleagues and I held an informational hearing on February 22, to provide oversight and investigate the recent utility bill price spikes. At the hearing, we heard testimony from the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), Municipal Utilities, PG&E, Southern California Gas Company, Environmental Defense Fund, professors from Stanford University, and more. At the hearing, I demanded greater transparency from utility companies and questioned PG&E and the CPUC on the rationale behind such drastic price increases, our transition away from natural gas, and new plans to implement "income-graduated fixed charges" for ratepayers, so any future price spikes are spaced out over several months. Covering these topics and more, it's clear we need to invest and expedite our transition away from fossil fuels and strengthen regional energy options, like microgrids, so we can be less reliant on large energy corporations like PG&E.



If you'd like to watch a full video of the hearing, [click here](#).

Utility Bill Credit

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) confirmed that a utility bill credit for customers will be sent out as soon as possible. The [California Climate Credit](#) will help offset higher than normal natural gas and electricity bills. According to PG&E, natural gas residential customers will receive around \$52.78, and electric residential customers will receive approximately \$38.39. Customers who receive both services will receive a total credit of \$91.17. To read more about this utility bill credit, [click here](#).

California Arrearage Payment Program

More than 300,000 eligible PG&E customers who experienced financial hardships during the pandemic will receive an automatic one-time bill credit before Feb. 3 under the [California Arrearage Payment Program](#). Customers do not need to apply for the credit and amounts will vary depending on the situation. If you believe you qualify for this program or want to read more, [click here](#).

Final Bill Package

Finalizing my first bill package for the 2023-24 legislative session has taken *a lot* of work and research. With 21 finalized items, I'm extremely proud of the bills my team and I have put together - many originated from ideas and conversations I've had with residents in the community. Below, I've listed my entire legislative package for this year, including a description of each item and what it will accomplish.

AB 92 - body armor prohibition

Based on the disturbing trend of mass shooters using military-grade body armor to prolong their rampages, this bill will prohibit anyone who is barred from possessing firearms - violent criminals, domestic abusers, mentally unstable individuals, etc - from purchasing or possessing body armor.

AB 99 - pesticide spraying restrictions

Maintains local environmental protections by requiring the California Department of Transportation (CalTrans) to eliminate the spraying of pesticides on highways in counties (like Marin and Sonoma) that have passed resolutions restricting the use of such toxic chemicals.

AB 319 - protecting mobile home residents

Establishes greater transparency with mobile home inspectors by requiring them to disclose any financial investments in mobile home parks they supervise, or any residences in the region, thus eliminating the potential for conflicts of interest that could put housing inspectors in ethically compromising situations.

AB 388 - expediting fire prevention grants

Expedites funding for vegetation management projects by allowing CalFire to approve groups of grants, instead of authorizing them one-by-one.

AB 404 - streamlining organic farming certification

Requires the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to evaluate duplicative reporting requirements affecting small and mid-scale farmers/farming operations, specifically relating to the process of transitioning to organic farming and obtaining organic certification.

AB 405 - modernizing organic certification applications

Upgrades California's organic food registration system, moving it from a paper based system to online.

AB 406 - expanding grant opportunities for organic farming

Expands millions-of-dollars in grant opportunities for sustainable farmers by including "organic farming" in the Healthy Soils and California Farmland Conservancy programs.

AB 478 - protecting seniors in high wildfire-risk areas

Puts a cap on premium increases for fire insurance for seniors who live in high-risk fire zones and establishes a moratorium on fire insurance cancellations for these seniors in high-risk zones.

AB 582 - home hardening tax credits

Provides a tax credit to seniors living in high-risk fire zones who want to harden their property to protect against wildfires.

AB 620 - healthcare coverage for metabolic disorders

Extends health plan coverage for medical nutrition therapies that benefit pediatric patients (children) who may not be able to use, or are sensitive to, certain medications.

AB 828 - wetlands protection

Ensures future environmental planning includes robust protections for wetlands and small drinking water systems.

AB 838 - water bill transparency

Requires public water agencies to include in their yearly reports information about their rates/charges, as well as plans for infrastructure and repairs.

AB 935 - phased tobacco ban

Establishes a phased tobacco ban for those born on or after January 1, 2007. Following the successful efforts of the Marin County Board of Supervisors and North Bay health advocates to ban flavored tobacco products locally and the subsequent statewide ban approved by voters, this bill will work to ensure that the next generation of young people do not get addicted to tobacco and nicotine products.

AB 953 - marine life & whale vessel protections

Creates a statewide vessel speed reduction program to reduce pollution impacts from oceangoing vessels and reduce the chance of whale strikes off the coast.

AB 998 - biomass facilities long-term planning

Establishes a long-term plan to phase out older, polluting combustion biomass facilities and identifies opportunities to upgrade facilities to greener, more sustainable models.

AB 1109 - teen suicide prevention

Confronts the teen suicide epidemic by restricting the sale of the dangerous chemical sodium nitrite, which has been increasingly used by young people to take their own lives.

AB 1232 - helping disadvantaged farmers improve treatment of animals

Creates a grant program to help disadvantaged and small-sized farms expand and integrate higher animal welfare practices as required by Proposition 12.

AB 1274 - Young Californian's Inclusion Act

Establishes a Blue Ribbon Commission appointed by the Governor to conduct an assessment of state agencies' efforts to engage and include young Californians.

AB 1464 - Richmond-San Rafael bridge

Creates a pilot program to find a solution to the traffic congestion on the Richmond-San Rafael bridge that emphasizes the reduction of pollution.

AB 1589 - college tax savings (There Ought to be a Law winner)

Last month, we launched our ‘There Ought to be a Law’ contest, where North Bay constituents had the opportunity to submit ideas for legislation they want to see enacted in Sacramento. We had over 280 submissions! I’m pleased to announce our winner - Abby Young - who submitted an idea to allow parents to contribute money to college savings plans before state taxes are taken out, saving families money on taxes and higher education costs. As promised, the winning idea - AB 1589 - has now become the final bill in this year’s legislative package! Thanks again to everyone who submitted ideas. We will launch this contest again next year, so get ready!

Honoring the Legacy of Carol Singer Peltz

In January, the North Bay lost an incredible leader, public servant, and activist - Carol Singer Peltz. Ms. Peltz was a fourth-generation San Franciscan raised by a single mother in a working-class household who overcame societal barriers of the time to earn a degree in French from Stanford University and a teaching credential at the University of California at Berkeley. She went on to become a sixth grade teacher in San



Francisco and coordinated mentoring and placement programs for gifted African American students with the NAACP. Moving to Sausalito in 1963, Ms. Peltz became the first woman elected to the Sausalito-Marin City Sanitary District board in 1979. Ms. Peltz served on the City Council from 1980 to 1988, serving twice as mayor where she championed local environmental issues - launching the city’s first curbside recycling program. Ms. Peltz was also a fierce environmental advocate who fought to protect the city’s open space, shoreline and resources.

Ms. Peltz was truly a North Bay icon and we will all miss her charisma, passion, dedication, and kindness. On Monday, February 13th, I adjourned the State Assembly in honor of Ms. Peltz. If you would like to watch the video from this memorial, [click here](#).

Upcoming District Events

I’m excited to announce my first two Legislative Town Halls in Marin and Sonoma Counties. This will be a great opportunity to hear about the legislation that I am working on in more detail, and to ask any questions you might have regarding this year’s legislative session.

Sonoma County Legislative Town Hall

Sally Tomatoes, 1100 Valley House Dr, Rohnert Park CA 94928

Saturday, March 11, 2022, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Marin County Legislative Town Hall

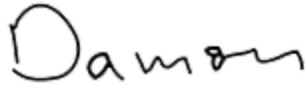
Mill Valley Community Center, 180 Camino Alto, Mill Valley, CA 94941

Saturday, April 8, 2022, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

I look forward to seeing you there!

As always, my door is open and my staff are available to assist you. Feel free to contact me through my [website](#), or by calling one of my offices below.

With gratitude,



Damon Connolly
Assemblymember, 12th District

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