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PURPOSE STATEMENT

Select Committee on Permitting Reform

California is facing multiple, interrelated crises. Our housing crisis has left over 180,000 of our residents without homes, with millions of tenants sacrificing basic needs to pay the rent, and home prices that only the wealthiest households can afford. Simultaneously, our unfolding climate crisis threatens to pummel the state with an ongoing series of devastating and costly droughts, floods, and wildfires.

Addressing both of these challenges will require that California rethink how we plan for and manage our environment. It will require that we build millions of housing units, primarily in infill locations. It will require that we upgrade and build systems to store and move water. It will require that we facilitate the generation and transmission of clean energy.

Unfortunately, we are poorly positioned to make the changes California desperately needs to facilitate. One of the primary reasons for this is that beneficial projects face a daunting regulatory regime. To receive permitting approval to build, projects often face years of review, at multiple levels of government, in arcane and oblique processes. Many of these processes were well-meaning and reflect the needs and interests of the period in which they were created. However, over time these processes have become overly bureaucratic and sclerotic, more designed to get to “no” than “yes.”

The purpose of the Select Committee on Permitting Reform is to systematically examine existing permitting processes and seek out meaningful solutions. As an environmentalist and a strong supporter of unions, I am ready to roll up my sleeves, bring parties to the table, convene hearings and have difficult conversations during this session, and beyond—if that’s what it takes—to find a way forward to reform the permitting process. As California builds to meet its housing, energy, and infrastructure needs, we must preserve the health of our environment and the wellbeing of our residents. Taking the time to have these discussions through a select committee process would give the Assembly a meaningful opportunity to do so.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Buffy Wicks". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Buffy Wicks
Assemblymember, 14th District