

Military Service Member Advocacy Organization *The Soldiers Project* Endorses LA Fire Safety Ordinance

Executive Director Michael McDowell cites concern for city's "most vulnerable residents"

Los Angeles, CA (July 26, 2019)—The Soldier's Project, a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting the wellbeing of military service members and their families, endorsed an LA fire safety ordinance today aimed at reducing residential, multi-story fires. The Soldier's Project was incorporated in 2010, and provides free, confidential treatment to thousands of military service members and dependents. The organization also advocates for issues related to the interests of military service members.

"These fires disproportionately affect our region's most vulnerable residents," says Michael McDowell, The Soldier's Project's Executive Director. "The tragedy of recent fires has served as a wake-up call."

McDowell is a retired Major of the U.S. Marine Corps, and the recipient of the Bronze Star Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal, and six Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medals. Major McDowell is also a member of Build with Strength, a coalition of the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association, which consists of community organizations, fire safety professionals, engineers, architects, and industry experts committed to strengthening the nation's building codes and ensuring greater access to secure housing.

The fire safety ordinance, introduced by LA City Councilmember Bob Blumenfield, would impose limitations on construction with combustible materials. Additionally, it would expand zones particularly susceptible to fires, with high wind velocities, and with high population densities in an effort to curtail unsafe construction methods and materials in Los Angeles.

The population grown in Los Angeles has increased the number of high-population areas. Combined with the recent state and nationwide surge in fire disasters, Councilmember Blumenfield sees the necessity to clamp down on careless construction. Regarding California's recent wildfires, Blumenfield writes, "The frequency and intensity of these fires have made them a serious public safety risk. Their speed and intensity have created an urgent need to address their impact."

Major McDowell sees the ordinance's preventative aspect as a crucial step in mitigating damage and loss from the greater Los Angeles fires. "It's clear now more than ever that it's not enough to rely on emergency response," says McDowell. "The Los Angeles City Council needs to take a strong, multidimensional approach to fire safety to keep our communities safe by enacting Councilmember Blumenfield's proposed ordinance."

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