



## **AB 2101 (Gipson) - Protect Disaster Recovery Workers from Human Trafficking and Exploitation**

### **SUMMARY**

Rebuilding efforts after natural disasters requires a flexible and highly adaptable workforce that can be mobilized quickly into working in dangerous and demanding conditions. These “**second responders**”<sup>1</sup> or “**resilience workers**”<sup>2</sup> are the utility crews, debris removal teams, waste clean-up groups, construction workers, electricians, day laborers – they are the workers who are integral to California’s ability to recover after a **climate catastrophe**. Despite the essential role they play, second responders face widespread issues of [wage theft](#), exposure to [hazardous conditions](#) without [proper training or PPE](#), and are [twice as likely to be trafficked](#) compared to workers at non-disaster worksites.

The abuses and risks that second responders have long faced are now further compounded with unprecedented federal immigration enforcement - Often working outdoors in plain sight and hired in informal or temporary capacities, these workers are particularly [vulnerable to ICE raids](#). Further, unethical employers and supervisors increasingly exploit the [threat of immigration enforcement](#) to coerce workers into unpaid labor, force them into jobs they [did not agree to perform](#), and force them to remain in exploitative and unsafe working conditions.



<sup>1</sup> The term “Second Responders” was coined by the National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON), which improves the lives of day laborers, migrants, and low-wage workers by building leadership and power among communities facing injustice. NDLON has worked extensively with many secondary responders in the aftermath of natural disasters, including the 2025 Los Angeles fires. Read more about their work here <https://ndlon.org/>

While these problems are not new, the 2025 Los Angeles fires coupled with aggressive ICE raids have made the ways in which these workers are defrauded and trafficked more visible.

*“As climate-related disasters become more frequent and immigration enforcement actions intensify, the need for proactive worker protection is urgent. This legislation represents an important first step towards closing a dangerous gap in California’s anti-trafficking framework.” – Assemblymember Gipson*

### **PROBLEM**

With dispersed worksites, long subcontracting chains, minimal oversight, and a workforce that is predominately immigrant, temporary, and/or marginalized and isolated, disaster restoration sites create fertile ground for abuse and labor trafficking.

Employers and subcontractors exploit, defraud and traffick with impunity because compliance and enforcement resources are especially spread thin after a natural disaster.

### **SOLUTION**

AB 2101 expands Civil Code § 52.6 to require the posting of Know Your Rights (KYR) and Human Trafficking Hotline information at designated disaster sites and at businesses that hire or deploy disaster-response workers. The bill also establishes standardized training requirements within the disaster restoration industry to ensure workers and supervisors understand these protections and how to identify these red flags in the field.

<sup>2</sup> The term “Resilience Workers” was coined by Resilience Force, a national non-profit organization that was founded in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Resilience Force works to create a new, stable workforce for disaster recovery and climate adaptation in the U.S. Read more about their work here <https://www.resilienceforce.org/>

Together, these measures provide **awareness, education, and empowerment** to vulnerable workers engaged in rebuilding efforts.

By pairing clear KYR postings with training, workers are better equipped to understand their rights, recognize trafficking and labor exploitation risks, and seek help when violations occur. At the same time, the required postings and training send a **clear message to unethical employers:** workers have rights, resources are accessible, and misconduct will not go unnoticed.

### MINIMAL FISCAL IMPACT

AB 2101 is a low-cost, high-impact education and prevention strategy:

- Expanding § 52.6 has historically imposed **minimal costs**.<sup>3</sup>
- Human Trafficking training mandates in other industries have been implemented with a **negligible fiscal impact**.<sup>4</sup>
- This Act leverages existing enforcement structures and proven low-cost education models, ensuring **no additional financial burden** on the state.

### CONCLUSION

Laws only protect when workers know their rights. By requiring Know Your Rights postings and standardized training within this industry, California can prevent the trafficking and exploitation that consistently emerge in disaster recovery.

Amending the Civil Code to extend these proven safeguards will equip vulnerable workers to recognize abuse and assert protection. This legislation is an important first step towards safeguarding the state's disaster response workforce and by extension the state's ability to rebuild effectively after natural disasters.

<sup>3</sup> A.B. 1740, Assemb. Appropriations Comm., Analysis of A.B. 1740 (April 26, 2023)(Cal.), available at <https://trackbill.com/s3/bills/CA/2023/AB/1740/analyses/assembly-appropriations.pdf>

### ABOUT THE SUNITA JAIN ANTI-TRAFFICKING INITIATIVE

Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Policy Initiative (SJI) is an evidence-based and survivor-informed think tank based out of Loyola Law School. SJI intentionally works towards systemic change and filling the gaps in human trafficking prevention by focusing its policy advocacy on the intersectionality of 5 pillars: Government Accountability, Racial Justice, Immigrant Justice, Climate Justice and Economic Justice.

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<sup>4</sup> S.B. 970, Assemb. Appropriations Comm., Analysis of S.B. 970 (August 15, 2018) (Cal.), available at [https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billAnalysisClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=2017201805B970#](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billAnalysisClient.xhtml?bill_id=2017201805B970#)