



BGA Update

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Bridgford Gleason & Artinian

BRIDGFORD AMONG ATTORNEYS SECURING \$13.5B SETTLEMENT FROM PG&E FOR WILDFIRE VICTIMS

In early December 2019, **Bridgford, Gleason & Artinian** was among a group of attorneys who secured a \$13.5 billion settlement from Pacific Gas & Electric Company (PG&E) to compensate victims of recent California wildfires caused by the utility company's equipment. Bridgford, along with two other Southern California firms, represent more than 5,500 victims of the Wine Country/North Bay Fires in November 2017, the Camp/Paradise Fire in November 2018 and assorted wildfires, and are among a select group of 13 firms representing more than 50,000 plaintiffs combined on inverse condemnation, negligence and wrongful death lawsuits against PG&E.



From left to right: Bridgford, Gleason & Artinian Partners John Gleason, Richard Bridgford and Michael Artinian in their Newport Beach office

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"PG&E's bankruptcy required a delicate balance between achieving our goal of compensating wildfire victims and deterring any future bad behavior that could cause more wildfires, while ensuring the utility company remains functional and keeps power flowing to California residents," said **Richard Bridgford**, partner at Bridgford, Gleason & Artinian. "This settlement achieves both."

BACKGROUND

The devastating Camp/Paradise Fire that started on November 8, 2018, is the deadliest wildfire in California history which claimed the lives of at least 85 individuals, destroyed more than 500 businesses and nearly 19,000 homes, leaving thousands homeless.

The Wine Country/North Bay Fires, individually known as the Tubbs, Pocket, Atlas, Nuns and Patrick Fires were a series of 250 wildfires that ignited on November 7, 2017 and became the second most destructive wildfire in California history (after the Camp/Paradise Fire) having burned at least 245,000 acres that caused more than \$10 billion in damages.



BRIDGFORD AMONG ATTORNEYS SECURING \$13.5B SETTLEMENT FROM PG&E FOR WILDFIRE VICTIMS *continued...*

PG&E filed for bankruptcy on January 29, 2019. In November 2019, a bankruptcy judge ruled against PG&E's challenge to California's inverse condemnation law, leaving it liable for property damage from fires caused by its equipment. As part of PG&E's bankruptcy proceedings, the utility company must demonstrate that it is financially viable and will be capable of adopting the safety protocols set forth in Assembly Bill 1054 by June 2020.

Assembly Bill 1054 was passed as urgency legislation in July 2019 and created additional safety oversight and processes for utility infrastructure, recast recovery of costs from wildfire damages to third-parties, and authorized an electrical corporation and ratepayer jointly funded Wildfire Fund to address future related wildfire liabilities.

On December 6, 2019, PG&E reached an agreement to payout \$13.5 billion to settle claims arising from the Butte Fire in 2015, the Ghost Ship Fire in 2016, the Wine Country/North Bay Fires in 2017 and the Camp/Paradise Fire in 2018, subject to the California Governor and bankruptcy court approval. PG&E also extended the deadline for wildfire victims who were impacted by these fires to submit a claim to receive compensation from the settlement until December 31, 2019. The settlement requires approval by the United States Bankruptcy Court.

WILDFIRE SETTLEMENT MEDIA COVERAGE

Richard Bridgford spoke to the media about the \$13.5 billion settlement from Pacific Gas & Electric Company (PG&E) to compensate victims of wildfires caused by the utility company's equipment between 2015-2018.

<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2019-12-06/pge-settlement-fire-northern-california>

[https://abc7news.com/wildfire-victims-raise-concerns-with-\\$135b-pg-e-settlement-/5740816/](https://abc7news.com/wildfire-victims-raise-concerns-with-$135b-pg-e-settlement-/5740816/)

<https://www.abc10.com/video/news/local/wildfire/wildfire-survivors-respond-pge-settlement/103-390b20d2-e2de-4557-8e95-647b4b6423cc>

<https://www.ktvu.com/news/wildfire-victims-learn-preliminary-details-of-pges-proposed-multi-billion-dollar-settlement>

[https://abc30.com/wildfire-victims-raise-concerns-with-\\$135b-pg-e-settlement-/5741543/](https://abc30.com/wildfire-victims-raise-concerns-with-$135b-pg-e-settlement-/5741543/)