



May 31, 2022

Editorial Board
c/o Mike Wolcott, Editor
Chico Enterprise-Record
400 E. Park Avenue
Chico, CA 95928

Chico Enterprise-Record Editorial Board,

I am always reluctant to engage in a public conversation when it concerns the interests of others. However, the misinformed editorial of your paper requires an informed response. I fully support freedom of the press but suggest some fact checking on your part might help.

I do not now nor have I ever charged \$1,500 per hour for my work as Trustee. My salary, not hourly rate, was fixed by the Bankruptcy Court and duly recorded in the Fire Victim Trust Agreement documents, Section V, subsection 5.6 (dated July 1, 2020). It has not changed.

The reason I chose not to engage with the letter writers is that they are not lawyers representing the victims. They are politicians late to the party but looking to be relevant. The reason they wrote a letter with copies to public officials was to show that this was the only way they could get information. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The hundreds of lawyers who do represent the victims have open lines of communication with the Trust and work each day sharing information to further their clients' interests. We talk to them daily. Additionally, I regularly talk to County Supervisors, Assemblypersons and State Senators about the Trust and its workings. We maintain a complete, open and current website full of information about the Trust and how to seek help and get questions answered.

But for whatever reason, the writers never attempted to inform themselves, either by talking to me or my staff or even looking at our website. Why?

You opine that the concerns expressed in the letter were well-founded. If so, why not call and engage in a meaningful dialogue and explanation? Had they done so, like all others, they would have found that the Trust does not segregate fire victims by fires; fire victims are fire victims.

Additionally, they would have been able to tell their constituents that approximately 65% of all claims have been completely evaluated at \$9.53 billion. They would also know that we have authorized 45% of that amount, or \$4.29 billion to be paid. In addition to those payments, I caused the Trust to create an emergency payment program for those in dire need. It is called Preliminary Payments. They are an advance on the victims' ultimate recovery. To date, 34,000 Fire Victims have received over \$870 million in Preliminary Payments.

The letter writers also know the Trust does not have a corpus of \$13.5 billion. The Fire Victim Trust received \$6.75 billion in cash and 478 million shares of PG&E stock. We have sold 100 million shares for a little over \$1 billion and have 377 million shares to yet monetize. So why



reference the \$13.5 billion if not to make a more compelling negative story? Additionally, the reference to well-paying jobs for massive legal teams is not only unfounded but seems intended to inflame opinion concerning the Trust's operation. Why include that accusatory language in a simple request for information? Do you think that was intended to be complimentary of the Trust? These unfounded allegations inappropriately increase public concern about the Trust and do a disservice to the victims for whom they claim to care.

Finally, you accuse me of arrogance and unprofessionalism. I have been a judge and justice for over 40 years and have dealt with all types of litigants. None are more deserving than these fire victims. My staff of 400 claims processors, evaluators, and experts work hard every day to bring some small bit of justice to those who are affected by the fires. They are neither arrogant nor unprofessional. My frustration is fueled by the fact that the information sought by this letter was and is readily available. All they needed to do was ask. But their public grand standing and attack on the Trust and rush to the media seems to be politically self-serving.

Thirty-four thousand other Fire Victims have already received relief the letter writers are suggesting for some unidentified victims. If those victims are represented by counsel, we at the Trust are unable to talk to them directly. By law, we must communicate with their lawyers. Some time ago, to help our unrepresented victims, I caused the Trust to hire and train 30 California Berkley law students to assist them in navigating the intricacies of electronic claims, including what documents are needed to prove a claim, where to get them, and how to file a claim for emergency relief. All at no cost to the victims. As stated above, 34,000 victims' requests for Preliminary Payments have been received and paid. How? Because they engaged. They asked.

I answered the letter in question by telephoning the appropriate person to tell them why I did not think their request was appropriate. They did not call back to discuss the matter. They went to the media.

I see little reason to take my staff's time away from advancing payments to the victims in order to help politicians make a statement. The Trust has been in operation for almost two years and yet, by their letter, none of them had the slightest idea of its workings. We are not flipping off the people who have been burned out of their homes. To the contrary, we are fully focused on the victims, not the politicians. Don't you confuse the two. To do so, would really be a horrific miss.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John K. Trotter", is written over a horizontal line.

Justice John K. Trotter (Ret.), Trustee