



Written by [Paul Dragu](#) on January 13, 2025

Los Angeles Residents Demand Resignation of Mayor Karen Bass Over City's Botched Response to Fires

Los Angeles residents are demanding that Mayor Karen Bass resign immediately. A [petition](#) asking her to pack her stapler and leave office “due to her gross mismanagement and failure to effectively respond to the devastating 2025 fires in and around the city of Los Angeles” has garnered more than 120,000 signatures.

According to the petition:

Water supplies have been severely strained, billions of taxpayer dollars have been misallocated or left unaccounted for, and countless lives have been lost. Families have been displaced, homes destroyed, and livelihoods shattered — yet Mayor Bass has been absent from the frontlines, choosing to travel abroad while her constituents suffer.



AP Images
Karen Bass

Bass Abroad

Nearly a week ago, apocalyptic fires ignited in Southern California and quickly spread thanks to powerful Santa Ana winds. The infernos have razed entire neighborhoods to the ground, left thousands homeless, and killed at least 24 people. But while nature's winds obviously fueled the fires and made firefighting very difficult, many are beginning to blame bad leadership for making a disastrous event worse.

When the Palisades Fire ignited, Mayor Bass was in Ghana. She was there as part of Joe Biden's delegation to celebrate the inauguration of Ghana's president — a move that doesn't have a single obvious thread of connection to her job as the city's mayor. And when she returned, “she did not exactly inspire confidence,” as Matt Bilinsky, an L.A. attorney, [put it](#) in *The Spectator*:

[She fumbled] teleprompter reads at a press conference and [remained] sullen, silent and doughy-eyed when asked by a foreign reporter to explain the nature of her trip (and late return).

[Video](#) of Bass' silence when confronted by a Sky News reporter has gone viral.

Leadership to Blame?

There are two competing narratives around the accusation that bad leadership is partly to blame. The defensive one says that, in this case, Mother Nature was not to be denied. It doesn't matter that fire



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hydrants went dry, because the winds were too strong and the fires too large and numerous for any adequate degree of preparation to have existed. The other narrative accepts that the gravity of the fires was great, but points to examples of ineptitude to support the accusation that the destruction could've been mitigated with competent leadership.

A senior professional in a California water utility [told](#) independent investigative journalist Michael Shellenberger that a massive water reservoir could've helped immensely had it not been out of commission when the fires started.

Had a massive water reservoir been online, it wouldn't have made much difference to LA firefighters, say the media. In fact, it would have made a massive difference. And now a whistleblower has come forward to say the reservoir should never have been drained in the first place. pic.twitter.com/H5M5uLNFhc

— Michael Shellenberger (@shellenberger) [January 12, 2025](#)

The Santa Ynez reservoir in the Pacific Palisades had been closed for repairs when the fires broke out, NBC News [reported](#). Marty Adams, a former general manager of the L.A. Department of Water and Power, told NBC that “it is unlikely to have made a significant difference in the battle against the Palisades Fire.”

But that's not what Shellenberger's whistleblower believes. The Santa Ynez reservoir is uphill from the Palisades Fire. The firefighters battling it would have had first access to its 117 million gallons of water before other firefighters below, which would likely have kept water pressure high. Said the whistleblower:

117 million gallons is a huge amount of treated water storage to have available for firefighting. Massive. Maybe one of the biggest treated water storage reservoirs on the whole West Coast.

Delayed Response

Then there's the alleged delayed response from the acting mayor, L.A. City Council President Marqueece Harris-Dawson, who was in charge while Bass was partying in Africa.

Eric Spiegelman, a former city commissioner, said that Harris-Dawson waited too long to issue an emergency declaration. He waited until Tuesday (Dec. 7) at 5 p.m. “By then the Palisades Fire had been burning for 6 ½ hours, and half the neighborhood had already been immolated,” according to Spiegelman.

The former commissioner said the city's leaders failed to preemptively declare an emergency despite “several warnings of extreme fire danger issued by the [National Weather Service] between Friday and Monday.”

Bass left town just as the National Weather Service began ratcheting up its warnings about the coming windstorm, the *Los Angeles Times* [reported](#). Because of this, continued Spiegelman:

There was no emergency declaration until Tuesday evening, there was no federal aid available until Tuesday night, which is why Biden didn't deploy water-dropping Navy helicopters until Wednesday.



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He finished by laying the blame at the feet of Bass:

Marqueece doesn't do anything significant as acting Mayor without consulting Karen Bass. Keep all this in mind when someone tells you it didn't matter than Karen Bass was in Ghana.

On Friday, California Gov. Gavin Newsom, who initially tried to downplay the fact that hydrants ran out of water, [called](#) for an investigation to look into what happened with the Santa Ynez reservoir.

NEW: I am calling for an independent investigation into the loss of water pressure to local fire hydrants and the reported unavailability of water supplies from the Santa Ynez Reservoir.

We need answers to ensure this does not happen again and we have every resource available to... pic.twitter.com/R0vq0wwZph

— Gavin Newsom (@GavinNewsom) [January 10, 2025](#)

Even *The New York Times* is piling on. Amy Chozick, a screenwriter and executive producer based in L.A., wrote an op-ed titled [“Los Angeles Is Being Crushed Under the Weight of Inaction”](#) in which she expressed a desire for someone heroic and competent to emerge in this disaster:

We are heartbroken, suffocating in toxic air and crushed under the weight of inaction. I want people to step in who care more about saving the city than saving their careers. We need someone to stand with authority in front of a whiteboard and to tell us the plan. I'd take Arnold Schwarzenegger appearing in front of the Eaton blaze and taking over. He did tell us he'd be back. At this point, I'd even take a Cuomo.



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