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Newsom waives modest reforms after protests in Malibu and Palisades.

California Homes for We, But Not Thee

Progressives in California complain about a shortage of housing—as long as the home building isn't in their neighborhoods. Witness how Gov. Gavin Newsom is waving away Democrats' modest permitting reforms.

Mr. Newsom last week suspended the state's SB9 law in Los Angeles areas affected by the January wildfires. The 2021 law makes it easier for homeowners to build multiple units on their lots. Democrats hoped this would add more dense housing supply. But Mr. Newsom started getting heat from the gentry liberals who oppose more housing in their Palisades palace backyards.

"This executive order responds directly to requests from local officials and community feedback, recognizing the need for local discretion in recovery and that not all laws are designed for rebuilding entire communities destroyed by fires overnight," Mr. Newsom said last week.

Few homeowners in California have sought to take advantage of the 2021 law in part because they would have to tear down their existing homes to build more units. But the proposition became more attractive in L. A. neighborhoods with multi-acre lots that were scorched by the fires. A handful of landowners have filed applications with the city to split their lots. Cue the political firestorm in the Palisades and Malibu. Residents howled that the 2021 law would let "opportunistic developers" build multifamily housing that would threaten their neighborhoods' "quiet, low-density" character. Mr. Newsom and Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass, who are under fire for their mishandling of the fires, backed the NIMBYs.

Mr. Newsom's order limiting more dense housing in the Palisades and Malibu is especially rich since he has threatened to fine cities that don't build more multi-family housing. He's also trumpeted Potemkin permitting reforms that would ease permitting for dense housing developments in urban areas.

The state's Democratic elites want to push more multi-family housing in the suburbs and jam the hoi polloi into big cities, while they enjoy estates in their enclaves. Then they complain that the state's sky-high housing prices are driving out middle-class families.

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