

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS LINDSEY P. HORVATH AND
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JULY 15, 2025

Clarifying and Strengthening the Enforcement Process for Price Gouging During a State of Emergency

The Declaration of a State of Emergency on January 7, 2025 as a result of the tragic wildfires activated price gouging protections under state and local law, prohibiting price increases beyond 10% of pre-disaster prices for goods and services, including housing. Subsequent state Executive Orders¹ and actions taken by the Board of Supervisors² (Board) have extended and strengthened price gouging protections, due to the scale of devastation from the fires and the ongoing economic impacts across the region.

Despite these protections, since the January emergency declaration the County’s Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA) has received over 3,800 consumer complaints alleging instances of price gouging, the vast majority related to

¹ Executive Orders [N-4-25](#), [N-9-25](#), [N-17-25](#), and [N-23-25](#)
² Item 51-B, February 4, 2025, “[Combatting LA County’s Price Gouging Crisis: Protecting Renters and Consumers](#)”; Item 29-B, March 4, 2025, “[Extending Price Gouging Protections for Housing](#)”; and Item 7, June 24, 2025, “[Extending Price Gouging Protections for Housing](#)”

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housing. However, very few civil or criminal cases have been filed to date³. This perceived lack of enforcement can have a negative effect on deterrence and confidence in County government to protect the vulnerable. While more than 1,800 cease-and-desist letters have been sent to businesses, property owners, landlords, and real estate professionals, and over 230 referrals were made to the Price Gouging Task Force for further investigation and potential civil action, litigation can be complicated, expensive, and time-intensive in order to gather sufficient evidence required to meet criminal and civil burdens of proof for trial. The County needs additional tools to more swiftly and effectively enforce the price gouging protections.

We must strengthen and expand DCBA's current enforcement efforts to ensure that violators face meaningful consequences more quickly, and deter those who would take advantage of consumers and renters in a time of crisis.

Los Angeles County Code Chapter 8.09 protects County residents from price gouging, delegating investigation of complaints, subpoena powers, and the administration of public education and outreach to DCBA. While currently under Chapter 8.09, DCBA has the authority to administratively enforce the provisions of the price gouging ordinance pursuant to Chapter 1.25, to maximize DCBA's capacity and allow for expanded enforcement efforts, an ordinance that codifies a citation, cure, and appeal process tailored specifically for price gouging is needed.

WE, THEREFORE MOVE, that the Board of Supervisors direct County Counsel, in collaboration with the DCBA, to return to the Board of Supervisors within 30 days with

³ ["Price gouging exploded after LA fires. Community rent hike investigators ask: Where are the charges?"](#)
LAist, 5/6/25

an urgency ordinance to clarify and strengthen the enforcement and administration of Los Angeles County Code Chapter 8.09. The ordinance shall:

1. Codify the authority of the DCBA to:
 - a. Issue fines and penalties for violations of the price gouging ordinance Los Angeles County Code Chapter 8.09 up to \$1,000 per violation.
 - b. Establish fines of up to \$500 per violation for failure to comply with a DCBA investigation.
2. Include provisions for the issuance of citations, administrative fines and correction orders, and a process for appeals and reconsideration. The ordinance shall use the authorities, procedures, and infrastructure found elsewhere in the County Code as a guide, such as the powers delegated to DCBA under the minimum wage ordinance, while including any provisions, to the extent permitted by law, needed to improve and strengthen the enforcement of price gouging laws and encourage deterrence including but not limited to:
 - a. Clarifying the definition of a violation to include language that each day of noncompliance may be considered a separate and distinct violation;
 - b. Imposing violation cap per declared emergency;
 - c. Including requirement for responsible parties, after a decision has been made, to post notices of violations in a reasonable and conspicuous place;
 - d. Ensuring restitution to aggrieved parties;
 - e. Allowing DCBA to proactively enforce provisions of Los Angeles County Code Chapter 8.09;
 - f. Retaliation prohibitions and restrictions;

- g. Countywide business licensing procedures and requirements that encourage compliance;
- h. Contracting rules that disqualify from County contracts entities found to have violated the provisions of price gouging ordinance;
- i. Allowing for escalating fines for non-compliance;
- j. Delegating authority to DCBA to negotiate settlement agreements to bring potential violators into compliance; and
- k. Authority to contract with Community Based Organizations to assist in education and outreach.

WE, FURTHER MOVE, that the Board of Supervisors direct the Director of DCBA, in collaboration with the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO), to conduct an awareness campaign educating consumers and businesses on DCBA's authority to cite and administer fines for price gouging violations.

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