

California Wildfire Legislative Recap 2020 Session

Fire Prevention:

Assembly Bill 1659 (Bloom) was a measure that Senate Democrats put together at the last minute as a wildfire prevention and preparedness funding proposal that would generate \$500 million annually. Funds would be generated by a fee on electric ratepayer bills in IOUs territories (PG&E, SCE and SDG&E) and go to various prevention and preparedness activities. Status: 08/30/2020 Failed; Senate Third Reading File

Assembly Bill 1873 (Committee on Budget) was a Budget Trailer Bill. In the waning moments of the Session, certain legislative leaders sought to convert the measure into a wildfire relief bill. As proposed to be amended, AB 1873 would have provided \$500 million to augment various local government vegetation management and fire prevention programs and provide increased grant opportunities for local government. In a legislative version of a fire drill, the Administration worked to craft compromise language, but the whole effort ran out of time and the bill was left unamended in the Assembly as the Session concluded. 08/31/2020 Failed (Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Committee).

Assembly Bill 3164 (Friedman) will establish a community wildfire risk model for application in the WUI. An advisory working group would be established, and like AB 3074, the bill would take effect upon being funded in next year's state budget. Status: 09/29/2020 Vetoed by Governor.

Assembly Bill 3256 (E. Garcia) would have placed on the November 2020 Ballot an Economic Recovery, Wildfire Prevention, Safe Drinking Water, drought Preparation and Flood Protection Bond Act. Status: 06/08/2020 Failed; Held in Assembly Rules Committee.

Assembly Bill 3267 (Smith) will require Cal OES to coordinate with representatives of the access and special needs community to update the State Emergency Plan. 09/29/2020 Signed by Governor; Chapter 260, Statutes of 2020.

Senate Bill 45 (Allen) would have placed on the November 2020 Ballot an Economic Recovery, Wildfire Prevention, Safe Drinking Water, drought Preparation and Flood Protection Bond Act. Status: 01/30/2020 Failed; Held as Assembly Desk.

Senate Bill 1156 (Archuleta) would have required CAL FIRE to develop a model protocol identifying best practices for preventing fires caused by lithium-ion batteries. Status: 09/01/2020 Failed; Senate Inactive File.

Senate Bill 1199 (McGuire) would have established a Commission on Home Hardening with the responsibility of developing a three-tier certification system of fire prevention levels for structures in the WUI. Status: 08/14/2020 Failed; (Assembly Governmental Organization Committee).

Senate Bill 1348 (Stern) would have promoted home and community wildfire resilience through a series of fire prevention and vegetation management efforts at both the state and local level. Status: 08/26/2020 Failed; Assembly Third Reading File

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Emergency Planning:

Senate Bill 1386 (Moorlach) will expressly provide that fire hydrants are a part of water service for the purposes of Proposition 218 to prevent a shift of this financial responsibility to local fire departments. 09/29/2020 Signed by Governor; Chapter 240, Statutes of 2020.

Senate Bill 862 (Dodd) would have defined a public safety power shutoff as a state of emergency and added specified protocols on all electrical corporations regarding such events. Status: 08/14/2020 Failed (Assembly Utilities & Energy Committee).

Senate Bill 909 (Dodd) will authorize an emergency vehicle to be equipped with a "hi-lo" audible warning system to be used exclusively to warn the public of an immediate need to evacuate. The bill has been amended to add an urgency clause to allow it to become effective immediately upon enactment. Status: 09/29/2020 Signed by Governor; Chapter 262, Statutes of 2020.

Senate Bill 952 (Nielsen) would have exempted from state and local sales and use tax backup generators used by local governments during de-energization events. Status: 06/29/2020 Failed (Assembly Revenue & Taxation Committee).

Senate Bill 1312 (McGuire and Stern) would have required the PUC to provide for expedited undergrounding of electrical lines by utilities in designated areas to promote fire prevention and reduce public safety power shutoffs. Status: 08/14/2020 Failed (Assembly Utilities & Energy Committee).

Assembly Bill 2054 (Kamlager) will establish a three-year Cal OES pilot program to distribute grants to organizations providing community-based assistance in response to local emergencies. Status: 09/30/2020: Vetoed by Governor.

Assembly Bill 291 (Chu) would have established a new fund to support planning of mitigation projects to assist local governments to become better prepared to meet emergency management preparedness, readiness and resilience goals. Status: 08/18/2020 Failed deadline (Senate Governmental Organization Committee).

Assembly Bill 2076 (Bigelow) would have required the Director of Parks and Recreation to develop a wildfire management plan for all their property located within a high or very high fire hazard severity zone. Status: Failed deadline (Senate Natural Resources & Water Committee).

Assembly Bill 2167 (Daly and Cooley) would have authorized the Insurance Commissioner to establish an insurance market action plan to expand insurance policies in the WUI contingent upon inclusion of a catastrophic risk model. Status: 08/24/2020 Failed; Senate Third Reading File

Assembly Bill 2367 (Gonzalez) would have required insurance companies to write and renew homeowner insurance policies for hardened homes and communities that meet statewide standard. Status: 11/30/2020 Stalled in Committee on Insurance

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Assembly 2968 (Rodriguez) will require Cal OES to establish best practices for counties developing and updating their emergency plan. Status: 09/29/2020 Signed by Governor; Chapter 257, Statutes of 2020.

Senate Bill 182 (Jackson) will create additional fire hazard planning responsibilities on cities and counties to make findings before taking development actions in very high fire risk areas, including related fire planning and review by multiple agencies and, at the request of the fire service, would create a grant program for small jurisdictions to implement the requirements set forth in the bill. The bill also was amended to provide time to phase in the various review programs established by the bill. Status: 09/30/2020 Vetoed by Governor.

Senate Bill 292 (S. Rubio) would have required the Insurance Commissioner to complete a study on wildfire risk and insurance, including market-based approaches by July 1, 2022. Status: 08/31/2020 Failed (Assembly Inactive File).

Senate Bill 474 (Stern) would have prohibited the approval of new development in very high fire severity zone or in the SRA. Status: 08/14/2020 Failed (Assembly Local Government Committee).

Senate Bill 801 (Glazer) would have required utility companies to provide backup electrical resources to protect vulnerable populations. Status: Failed (Assembly Utilities & Energy Committee).

Emergency Communications:

Senate Bill 431 (McGuire and Glazer) would have required the PUC to develop and implement backup power rules for telecommunication services that are provided in Tier 2 or Tier 3 High Fire Threat Districts. Status: 08/20/2020 Held in Senate Appropriations Committee

Senate Bill 1069 (Jackson) would have expanded reporting requirements on outages from telecommunication companies. Status: 06/19/2020 Failed deadline (Senate Appropriations).