This bill, as an urgency measure, exempts continuously appropriated Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) programs related to healthy forests, fire prevention, prescribed fire and other fuel reduction projects from the California Jobs Plan Act of 2021, which required the Air Resources Board (ARB) to work with the Labor and Workforce Development Agency (LWDA) to ensure GGRF grant program applicants meet employer and procurement standards.

FISCAL EFFECT:

Minor and absorbable costs to ARB and LWDA.

COMMENTS:

1) Purpose. According to the author, this bill clarifies wildfire projects were never intended to be included in California Jobs Plan Act requirements and “allowing this exemption will help to further support wildfire projects and safe wildfire management with the most skilled workforce available.” This bill is supported by rural county and water agency associations.

2) Fulfilling Legislative Intent. AB 680 (Burke), Chapter 746, Statutes of 2021, required GGRF funding guidelines to be updated to ensure all grant program applicants meet fair and responsible employer standards, have inclusive procurement policies and pay prevailing wage. However, AB 680 included exemptions for certain GGRF-funded projects, including those involving federal funding, 100% affordable housing projects and Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund projects.

On September 9, 2021, the author of AB 680 submitted a letter of intent to the Assembly Journal, explaining:

Due to newly amended budget language, funding was continuously appropriated for wildfire prevention projects, and I was unable to amend AB 680 in a timely fashion to expressly state that such projects are not affected by my bill….I will introduce urgency legislation with Senator Dodd in January to address this issue in order to assure that money for wildfire prevention projects will not be affected in 2025 when the bill guidelines would go into effect.

This bill fulfills this declaration of legislative intent by adding continuously appropriated wildfire prevention projects to the existing list of projects exempted from AB 680’s scope;
such projects would not be required to meet employer and labor standards to continue receiving GGRF funding.

3) **Related Legislation.** AB 1717 (Aguiar-Curry) expands the definition of public works, for which prevailing wage must be paid to workers, to include fuel reduction work. AB 1717 is pending on this committee’s Suspense File.

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