

SENATE THIRD READING  
SB 272 (Laird)  
As Amended July 5, 2021  
Majority vote

## SUMMARY

This bill increases the age of eligibility to enroll in a local corps from 18-25 to 18-26; and makes changes to specified codes to use gender-neutral language. This is an urgency measure.

## Major Provisions

## COMMENTS

- 1) *Corps*. The California Conservation Corps (CCC), established by Governor Brown during his first term in 1976, is the oldest and largest state conservation corps program in the country. It is modeled after the 1930s Civilian Conservation Corps. The CCC's motto is "Hard work, low pay, miserable conditions ... and more!" Since the CCC creation, it has provided over 11 million hours of emergency response for nearly every major California natural disaster including floods, fires, and earthquakes.

Although the CCC was originally conceived as a labor source for trail maintenance and restoration, it has evolved to a workforce development program. Corps members learn skills such as, forestry management, energy auditing and installation, emergency services management, and firefighting. Many corps members also receive their high school diplomas and industry certifications at the conclusion of their service. The CCC provides health care (including mental health) to all of its members. More than 120,000 young adults have participated in the CCC. Approximately 3,000 Corps members apply each round for the 1,529 available Corps member slots. Across California, the CCC operates 24 centers; nine are residential where Corps members live on-site. CCC's residential centers house more than 600 Corps members in total. Corps members must be California residents between the ages of 18 and 25.

There are 14 state-certified local corps in California. Their mission is to preserve and protect the environment and provide job skills training and educational opportunities to young adults. They are community-based organizations that engage young adults in service projects addressing recreation, conservation, disaster response, and community needs. Through a term of service that could last from a few months to a year, corps members gain a high school diploma or GED, life skills, paid work experience, and job training. Each local corps works with or operates a charter school to provide educational services and helps corps members connect to college and vocational education programs.

Local corps also have an age limit of 25 years, which generally made sense for previous generations because that met the demand at the time for the local corps' services and provided important benefits to the young adults and society. More recently, the local corps and their charter school partners have noted that, on average, it is taking young adults more time to complete their educations and become established in jobs and careers than previous generations. This is especially true for the populations served by the local corps, many of whom are at-risk youth who have dropped out of the school system and struggle to find job

opportunities that provide a living wage and other benefits. The local corps have noted that authorization to serve 26-year olds would capture a significant proportion of this group while retaining the local corps' foundational mission of serving young adults.

- 2) *Gender neutral changes.* This bill is consistent with ACR 260 (Low), Chapter 190, Statutes of 2018, which encouraged the Legislature to engage in a coordinated effort to revise existing statutes and introduce new legislation with inclusive language by using gender-neutral pronouns or reusing nouns to avoid the use of gendered pronouns. That resolution found that "the use of the pronouns 'he' or 'she' for individuals is not inclusive of all transgender people, nonbinary people who may not ascribe to a particular or fixed gender, or people who otherwise use different pronouns."

There are a number of universities, states, and other nations that now recognize a nonbinary gender and are taking steps to redraft their rules and laws to be more inclusive and avoid the use of gendered pronouns. In addition, the scientific literature suggests that gender-neutral language can help achieve more than symbolic change, for example, by contributing to the reduction of gender stereotyping and discrimination, and helping to reshape cultural norms.

### **According to the Author**

While California has lead on efforts to promote diversity, equity, and equality, our laws have not kept pace. It's time we change archaic references within state law that are future forward and adequately represent those who dedicate themselves to our state.

### **Arguments in Support**

This bill is supported by a coalition of civil rights organizations as well as the Lieutenant Governor and several state departments. Representative of the coalition ACLU California writes:

American Civil Liberties Union California Action is pleased to support your SB 272, which would increase inclusivity within California law by updating language within California Conservation Corps, Community Conservation Corps ("local corps"), CALFIRE references in the Public Resources Code, CHP Commissioner, and Insurance Code licensing provisions to ensure gender neutrality.

Gender inclusion is vital in ensuring equality and furthers the ideals that all services, opportunities, and establishments are open to all people. For these reasons, ACLU California supports SB 272.

### **Arguments in Opposition**

None received

### **FISCAL COMMENTS**

This bill is non-fiscal

**VOTES****SENATE FLOOR: 36-0-4**

**YES:** Allen, Archuleta, Atkins, Bates, Becker, Borgeas, Bradford, Caballero, Cortese, Dahle, Dodd, Durazo, Eggman, Glazer, Gonzalez, Grove, Hueso, Hurtado, Jones, Kamlager, Laird, Leyva, McGuire, Min, Newman, Nielsen, Ochoa Bogh, Pan, Portantino, Roth, Rubio, Skinner, Umberg, Wieckowski, Wiener, Wilk

**ABS, ABST OR NV:** Hertzberg, Limón, Melendez, Stern

**ASM NATURAL RESOURCES: 11-0-0**

**YES:** Luz Rivas, Flora, Chau, Friedman, Cristina Garcia, Mathis, McCarty, Muratsuchi, Seyarto, Stone, Wood

**ASM JUDICIARY: 11-0-0**

**YES:** Stone, Gallagher, Chau, Chiu, Davies, Lorena Gonzalez, Holden, Kalra, Kiley, Maienschein, Reyes

**UPDATED**

VERSION: July 5, 2021

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