

CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

AB 618 (Bauer-Kahan)

As Amended September 8, 2023

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Requires and authorizes changes to the Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) camping reservation system to deter late cancellations and no shows, and institutes a reservation drawing for up to five of the most popular camping and lodging sites.

Senate Amendments

- 1) Revise and recast the provisions of this bill.
- 2) Specify that the ban on new reservations is one calendar year for people who repeatedly book sites and fail to cancel or show up.
- 3) Authorize, instead of require, some provisions of this bill, including payment forfeiture.
- 4) Change the term reservation lottery system to reservation drawing.
- 5) Make technical and clarifying changes.

COMMENTS

State Parks oversees 280 park units throughout the state, with more than 15,000 campsites and other lodging options, like rustic cabins, cottages, tent cabins, floating campsites, and yurts. For many of these locations, reservations are available in advance of the arrival date through an online or phone-based reservation system called Reserve California. This system is managed by a contracted vendor. Sites become available for reservation on a rolling basis at 8 a.m., six months prior to the reservation start date.

In recent years, the demand for public campsites has skyrocketed as more people are heading outdoors for their well-being and mental health. Many State Parks camping and lodging locations are very popular and sites are reserved within minutes of being offered. Currently, there are few consequences for booking a site and then cancelling right before the reservation start date or not showing up at all. The maximum financial consequence for booking a site and then not showing up is typically the forfeiture of the cost of a single night plus a reservation fee.

This bill requires any contract State Parks enters into, on and after January 1, 2024, for purposes of managing the State Parks reservation system to include provisions to incentivize early cancellations. Among other provisions, these include:

- 1) Requiring Reserve California to send at least two reminder emails prior to the reservation start date to remind the reservation holder of their upcoming reservation, cancellation, and refund or credit options.
- 2) Increasing the financial consequences of a late cancellation or no-show. In particular, reservation holders that do not show up may lose their entire reservation cost and reservation fees.

- 3) Limiting new reservations for one calendar year for people who repeatedly book sites and fail to show up or cancel those reservations, leaving those sites unavailable for other people to access.

The reservation drawing pilot program proposed for up to five of the most popular state park units would test whether a drawing process might level the playing field for people to access the most competitive camping grounds. Those units could still have some sites available through the normal reservation process to provide a comparison.

According to the Author

"All Californians should have equal opportunities and access to reserve a campsite within our public parks. [This bill] promotes outdoor access for everyone by requiring State Parks to adopt modifications to the online camping registration system that deter late cancellations and no-shows."

Arguments in Support

The California State Parks Foundation writes in support, stating "[w]hile it is great that many of State Parks' camping and lodging sites are extremely popular, this popularity limits access to overnight stays at many of California's most beautiful locations. [This bill] proposes changes to the reservation system that incentivize early cancellations, which in turn should make more campsites available to everyone. This bill also requires State Parks to develop a pilot reservation lottery system for a subset of the most popular camping and lodging sites in order to make access to these sites more equitable."

Arguments in Opposition

No opposition on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, State Parks estimates one-time costs about \$25.2 million to update its systemwide connectivity to comply with the reservation requirements in this bill, among other things, as well as ongoing costs of about \$256,000 annually for two positions to monitor credit transactions and deposit processing, review and approve transactions, perform monthly reconciliation, and provide other accounting support (State Parks and Recreation Fund [SPRF] or General Fund).

VOTES:**ASM WATER, PARKS, AND WILDLIFE: 15-0-0**

YES: Bauer-Kahan, Mathis, Alanis, Bennett, Megan Dahle, Davies, Friedman, Hart, Wood, Pellerin, Blanca Rubio, Schiavo, Villapudua, Ward, Weber

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 11-0-5

YES: Holden, Bryan, Calderon, Wendy Carrillo, Mike Fong, Hart, Lowenthal, Papan, Pellerin, Weber, Ortega

ABS, ABST OR NV: Megan Dahle, Dixon, Mathis, Robert Rivas, Sanchez

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 79-0-1

YES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Juan Carrillo, Wendy Carrillo, Cervantes, Chen, Connolly, Megan Dahle, Davies, Dixon, Flora, Mike Fong, Vince Fong, Friedman, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Grayson, Haney, Hart, Holden, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Jones-Sawyer, Kalra, Lackey, Lee, Low, Lowenthal, Maienschein, Mathis, McCarty, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Stephanie Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Jim Patterson, Joe Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Reyes, Luz Rivas, Robert Rivas, Rodriguez, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Santiago, Schiavo, Soria, Ta, Ting, Valencia, Villapudua, Waldron, Wallis, Ward, Weber, Wicks, Wilson, Wood, Zbur, Rendon

ABS, ABST OR NV: Essayli

UPDATED

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CONSULTANT: Keith Cialino / W., P., & W. / (916) 319-2096

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