SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
Senator Blakespear, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	AB 1156		
Author:	Wicks		
Version:	5/23/2025	**Hearing Date:**	7/16/2025
Urgency:	No	**Fiscal:**	Yes
Consultant:	Brynn Cook		

SUBJECT: Solar-use easements: suspension of Williamson Act contracts: terms of easement: termination

DIGEST: This bill makes a number of changes to law governing the conversion of a Williamson Act contract into a solar-use easement (SUE) to expand what projects can go onto an SUE, what areas are eligible for SUE, and waiving the current fee associated with entering into an SUE on land contracted under the Williamson Act, among numerous other changes.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

1) Creates the Williamson Act also known as the California Land Conservation Act of 1965, which authorizes cities and counties to enter into agricultural land preservation contracts with landowners who agree to restrict the use of their land for a minimum of 10 years in exchange for lower assessed valuations for property tax purposes.

2) Creates Farmland Security Zones which authorizes cities and counties to allow agricultural land preservation contracts with landowners who agree to restrict the use of their land for a minimum of 20 years in exchange for lower-assessed valuations for property tax purposes

3) Provides three options for ending a Williamson Act contract:
   a) Either the landowner or local officials give "notice of nonrenewal," which stops the automatic annual renewals and allows the contract to run down over the next 10 years.
   b) Local officials can cancel a contract at the request of the landowner. To do so, local officials must make findings that cancellation is in the public interest and that cancellation is consistent with the purposes of the Williamson Act. The owner must pay a cancellation fee based on the "cancellation value" of the land. If the land under contract is covered by a

Farmland Security Zone, the Department of Conservation (DOC) must approve the cancellation.

c) Local officials can cancel a Williamson Act contract, but the landowner simultaneously puts an agricultural conservation easement or open space easement on other land of equal or greater value.

4) Authorizes a city or county and a landowner to simultaneously rescind a Williamson Act contract on marginally productive or physically impaired lands and enter into a solar-use easement that restricts the use of land to photovoltaic solar facilities, as specified. (Government Code §§ 51191-51192.2)

5) Defines a "solar-use easement" as a legal agreement, held by a city or county, which restricts land use to solar photovoltaic energy generation and related incidental uses, such as open space or agriculture. The easement may be permanent, fixed-term, or self-renewing, and applies only to parcels deemed eligible by the DOC. It prohibits any commercial, industrial, or residential uses and requires a recorded covenant that limits future development to uses consistent with solar energy production. (Government Code § 51190)

6) Establishes the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), as a statewide framework to protect groundwater resources by requiring local agencies to form groundwater sustainability agencies (GSAs) for the designated high and medium priority water basins. GSAs must develop and implement groundwater sustainability plans to avoid undesirable results and mitigate water overdraft within 20 years. (Water Code §§ 10720-10738)

7) Establishes the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Under CEQA, a lead agency determines whether a project is exempt from CEQA, or if it must do an initial study to determine if a project will have significant effects on the environment. If a project has no effect on the environment or effects that can be mitigated, the lead agency prepares a negative declaration (ND) or mitigated ND (MND). If the project will have significant impacts, the lead agency prepares an environmental impact report (EIR) to evaluate and propose mitigation measures for any effects on the environment, including impacts or likely impacts to land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and historic or aesthetic significance. (Public Resources Code (PRC) §§21000 et seq.)

8) Establishes the policy that all of the state's retail electricity be supplied with a mix of RPS-eligible and zero-carbon resources by December 31, 2045, and 100% of electricity procured to serve all state agencies by December 31, 2035, for a total of 100% clean energy. (Public Utilities Code § 454.53)

This bill:

1) Expands the permissible land uses of Solar Use Easements (SUEs) to include solar energy storage and appurtenant facilities.

2) Specifies that the provisions of any Williamson Act contract binding the land under the SUE would be inoperative (rather than rescinded pursuant to existing law) and the land would be enforceably restricted pursuant to law governing SUEs, as specified, and removes language allowing a SUE to exist in perpetuity.

3) Changes the process by which the DOC determines if a parcel under a Williamson Act contract is eligible for conversion into a SUE, including among other actions:
   a) Expands the eligibility criteria to convert land under a Williamson Act contract into an SUE to include the following scenarios:
      i) Instances where the land meets both of the following criteria:
         (1) The parcel or parcels have an average grade of less than 10% and have been historically used primarily as irrigated cropland rather than having been historically used primarily as unirrigated grazing land; or
         (2) The parcel or parcels are not encumbered by a conservation easement or enrolled in a land conservation program, the primary purpose of which is the protection of resources other than agriculture, such as recreation, grazing, open space, or biological resources;

   b) Removes a prohibition on parcels that are located on lands designated as prime farmland, unique farmland, or farmland of statewide importance, as specified. This makes those areas eligible for conversion to a SUE instead of preserving them under the Williamson Act;

   c) Requires DOC to make a determination on whether land is eligible for an SUE within 120 days following submission of a completed application package, or else the application is deemed approved; and

   d) Modifies an existing exemption from CEQA for Williamson Act contracts to further exempt all department determinations of eligibility from CEQA, and specifies that this exemption shall not be interpreted to exempt photovoltaic solar facilities from CEQA.

4) Changes SUE deed requirements and decommissioning rules by eliminating mitigation measures on or beyond SUE land, removing the requirement for performance bond or security requirements for land restoration for term easements or self-renewing easements, and allowing appurtenant facilities on SUE, among various other changes.

5) Modifies SUE enforcement and land use provisions by eliminating a private right of action if a city or county fails to seek injunctions for violations.

6) Authorizes a city or county to require, as a condition of entering into a SUE, that the solar facility enter into a community benefits agreement with one or more local communities, as specified.

7) Narrows the circumstances under which a city or county may choose not to renew an annually self-renewing SUE to those in which the landowner has materially failed to comply with the terms and conditions of the SUE, the solar photovoltaic or appurtenant facilities have been operated in a manner that constitutes a continuing or repeated legal nuisance, or the photovoltaic solar facility's operating life has ended.

8) Repeals provisions of law governing termination or rescission of a SUE, including termination and rescission fees.

9) Requires the provisions of any Williamson Act contract affecting a parcel or parcels of land eligible and placed into a SUE to be inoperative for the SUE term, even if a notice of nonrenewal was served, as specified. Clarifies this process is in addition to other existing mechanisms under the WA, as specified.

10) Exempts the entry into and recordation of a SUE from CEQA review.

11)) Provides numerous technical, clarifying and conforming changes.

Background

1) *The Williamson Act.* The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, also known as the Williamson Act, is a program administered by the DOC to conserve agricultural and open space land. The Williamson Act allows private property owners within "an agricultural preserve" to sign voluntary contracts with counties and cities that restrict their land to agriculture, open space, and compatible uses for the next 10 years, with an automatically renewing contract. These agricultural preserves are areas where a local jurisdiction wants to protect and promote agricultural uses. Land owners could also choose to enter

into a contract and establish a Farming Security Zone, which is a 20-year minimum contract to preserve land for agriculture.

In return for entering into a Williamson Act contract and restricting land use to keep the door open to future agricultural use, landowners get a tax break to reflect the value of their use as agriculture or open space instead of their market value. The property tax reduction is greater for the longer-contract Farming Security Zones than for properties under the 10 year contracts, based on how much value it expects the parcel to produce when used for its intended use.

As of 2022, about 15.1 million acres of land across 52 counties were under Williamson Act contracts. According to DOC, participation in the program has been steady, hovering at about 16 million acres enrolled under contract statewide since the early 1980s. This number represents about one third of all privately held land in California, and about one half of the state's agricultural land. DOC estimates that individual landowners have saved anywhere from 20% to 75% in reduced property taxes each year, depending upon their circumstances.

In order to terminate a Williamson Act contract to develop land, a landowner has three options: nonrenewal, cancellation, or rescission.

- Nonrenewal. The normal way to end a Williamson Act contract is for either the landowner or local officials to give "notice of nonrenewal," which stops the automatic annual renewals and allows the contract to run down over the next 10 years.
- Cancellation. Land owners can request to cancel their contract with the city or county. The local officials must make findings that cancellation is in the public interest and that cancellation is consistent with the purposes of the Williamson Act. In addition, the landowner must pay a cancellation fee that is equal to 12.5% of the "cancellation valuation" of the property, or 25% in the case of a farmland security contract. If the landowner cannot meet the conditions, the board or city council must record a certificate of withdrawal of cancellation.
- Rescission. Rescission occurs when the county supervisors cancel a Williamson Act contract, but the landowner simultaneously puts an agricultural conservation easement or open space easement on other land of equal or greater value.

2) *Solar use easements on subpar farmland.* In 2011, the Legislature enacted SB 618 (Wolk) to modify the Williamson Act to encourage the development of solar panels on marginally productive or physically impaired farmland by creating a method for terminating a Williamson Act contract to use for

deploying solar panels. To get a solar use easement on Williamson land act land, the DOC must determine that the land is eligible for solar use easements.

DOC, in consultation with the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), can determine, based on substantial evidence, that a parcel is eligible for rescission of the existing Williamson Act contract and place the parcel into a SUE, if the farmland isn't prime, unique, or of statewide importance, unless that land is unsuitable for agricultural because of poor soil conditions.

Once the local government approves an SUE, the landowner can restrict the use of that land to solar facilities to collect and distribute solar energy, and other renewable facilities, open-space, or agricultural land. Once restricted to one of these uses, the land cannot be used land for other commercial, industrial, or residential uses for the duration of the easement, which can be in perpetuity, for a set number of years, or subject to annual self-renewals.

3) *DOC evaluation of eligible sites for SUEs*. To help DOC evaluate whether or not the land is eligible for an SUE under the WA, the landowner must provide the DOC with the following information:

- A written narrative demonstrating limitations of continued agricultural use;
- A recent soil test showing significantly reduced agricultural productivity;
- An analysis of water availability demonstrating insufficient water supply;
- An analysis of water quality demonstrating reduced agricultural production; and
- Crop and yield information for the past six years.

4) *Locals approve SUE and add environmental and planning criteria*. To approve a solar energy project on land under a SUE, the local agency must require implementation of a management plan including any recommendations from DOC. The management plan includes soil management, impacts on adjacent agriculture, and restoration of the land to its prior condition upon termination of the easement. Cities or counties can require any necessary or desirable restrictions, conditions, or covenants to restrict the land to solar facilities, which can include mitigation measures, or financial assurances to ensure the landowner restores the land to its original state when the easement terminates. This can include:

- Mitigation measures on, or beyond, the land subject to the solar use easement;
- If necessary to ensure the landowner meets decommissioning requirements when easement ends, financial assurances that the

landowner will restore the land to its previous condition once the solar use easement terminates;
- Provision for necessary amendments; and
- For term-limited or self-renewing easements, these restrictions must require the landowner to post a performance bond or other securities to fund the restoration of the land by the time the easement ends.

5) *Exiting solar use easements.* Solar use easements can be extinguished by nonrenewal, termination, or returning the land to its previous contract, similar to the processes for terminating Williamson Act contracts. If the landowner decides they no longer want to use the land pursuant to their solar-use easement, they can petition the city or county to terminate the easement. Before terminating the easement, the county assessor must calculate the termination fee equivalent to 12.5% of the termination value of the property, or the current fair market value of the parcels as if not easement was in place. Before the city or county terminates the easement, they must certify the termination fee to the county auditor, which the landowner must pay upon termination. The city or county can waive part of, or the entire, payment if it finds it is in the public's interest to do so in certain circumstances.

   If the landowner extinguishes the solar use easement, then they are responsible for restoring the land to the conditions that existed before the easement.

6) *Environmental impacts of solar on agricultural land.* Under SUEs, solar installations are a temporary use of land that could be reconverted to usable farmland. What are the impacts of solar power generation on agricultural land? The majority of studies report that solar power generation can decrease important factors that contribute to soil fertility: however, results are mixed. For instance, one study on solar arrays in the Gobi Desert found little difference in soil pH, total nitrogen, potassium, organic matter, and available phosphorus in the soil between rows with solar panels and rows with no solar panels, indicating that the solar arrays had no impact on soil nutrition[1]. On the other hand, studies in Colorado that tested soils seven years after solar project deployment found the carbon and nitrogen content to be lower in the soil on solar farms than in reference soils, demonstrating that the solar arrays can diminish soil nutrition.[2] Modelling studies have shown that deploying solar on

[1] Zhou, M., Wang, X., 2019. Influence of photovoltaic power station engineering on soil and vegetation: taking the Gobi Desert Area in the Hexi corridor of Gansu as an example. J SSWC 17 2, 132–138. Doi:10. 16843 / j. sswc. 2019. 02. 016.
[2] Choi C S, Cagle A E, Macknick J, Bloom D E, Caplan J S and Ravi S 2020a Effects of revegetation on soil physical and chemical properties in solar photovoltaic infrastructure Front. Environ. Sci.

farms increases runoff[3] and increases erosion.[4] Another study testing the impacts of solar panels after seven years in Italy found plots with solar panels had significantly less water holding capacity, and 50-60% reduced soil organic matter, diminishing soil fertility[5]. The authors of this study concluded that:

"In this study many significant variations in soil properties (physical, chemical and biochemical) were observed comparing the soil within the power plant to the nearby arable land, which represented the original land use…the setback on soil quality will certainly have future consequences on agronomic practices."

Comments

1) *Purpose of Bill.* According to the author, "AB 1156 updates California's Solar-Use Easement statute to permit lands with water constraints to be eligible for an easement, while modernizing eligibility criteria and easement terms. The legislation maintains local discretion, incorporating Groundwater Sustainability Agencies in any review of water limitations, updates the compatibility of solar-use easements with existing permitting processes and provides that land under easement be assessed at its full value. Vitally, the bill provides a path for lands to enter back into a Williamson Act contract at the conclusion of the term of an easement."

2) Changes incoming. AB 1156 was amended in the Senate Local Government committee on July 9th, 2025. However, due to timing restraints, those amendments will be adopted in this committee. Those amendments include:

a) Modifying the criteria that DOC will use to evaluate if lands are eligible for SUEs due to insufficient water resources, striking the requirement that the project has 'insufficient and groundwater available, to support commercially viable irrigated agricultural use' and replacing it with criteria that:
   i) The land has or will have insufficient surface or groundwater as determined with the following criteria:
      A) lands that are located within a groundwater basin designated as high priority in the most recent Bulletin 118 by the Department of Water Resources, and
      B) Water deliveries to the parcel or parcels have been reduced or curtailed by a water district or governmental agency by a

[3] Cook L M and McCuen R H 2013 Hydrologic response of solar farms J. Hydrol. Eng. 18 536–41
[4] Edalat M M 2017 Remote Sensing of the Environmental Impacts of Utility-Scale Solar Energy Plants (Las Vegas: University of Nevada)
[5] Moscatelli, M. C., Marabottini, R., Massaccesi, L., & Marinari, S. (2022). Soil properties changes after seven years of ground mounted photovoltaic panels in Central Italy coastal area. *Geoderma Regional*, *29*, e00500.

substantial amount for multiple consecutive years due to drought or other shortages, resulting in significantly reduced water availability for the parcel or parcels.

ii) Reiterates that parcel or parcels are not located on lands designated as prime farmland, unique farmland, or farmland of statewide importance, unless the DOC approves the project as required elsewhere in the law, and specifies that the important farmland designations shall not be changed solely due to irrigation status.

b) Requires the landowner to notify in writing the relevant workforce of their intent to enter into a SUE, at least 14 days before the public meeting at which the local government will decide whether or not to enter into the SUE.

c) Requires the solar developer to enter into a community benefits agreement with the city or county where the SUE is located. Requires that the agreement provide community benefits, by the time the project construction begins, for any of the following:
   i) Job creation and training programs for local residents or farm workers.
   ii) Financial contributions that benefit Farm Youth Training Programs or Agricultural Trade Programs.
   iii) Financial contributions to community projects for groundwater recharge and/or water conservation programs.
   iv) Financial contributions that benefit land preservation.
   v) Financial contributions to agricultural innovation research.
   vi) Financial contributions that benefit workers displaced by water scarcity impacting agricultural jobs.

3) *Solar: on farm or elsewhere.* The state has established goals to reach 100% zero-carbon electricity by 2045. By 2030, the state's Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) requires 60% of electricity to come from renewable resources. According to the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA), California is expected to add over 20,000 MW of solar capacity in the next five years. AB 1156 makes numerous changes to the Williamson Act to promote SUE, which can help the state reach its clean energy goals.

   While some of the changes to SUE's diminish environmental criteria, it is worth considering that the impacts of solar power generation on agricultural land are likely to be less disruptive to ecosystems than solar power generation in other areas that may be desirable for solar energy generation, such as projects located in areas that provide habitat for sensitive native species. Solar

could also be deployed on brownfields and areas that are unlikely to support ecosystem functions, but required mitigation on brownfield sites can make such development prohibitively expensive.

4) *What does DOC do?* AB 1156 sets a 120-day time limit for DOC to review and approve SUEs. DOC estimates on average, review time for the four existing SUEs initiated (two of which have been approved) is 63 days. At fist blush, it may seem that 120 days should be ample given that it is nearly double the average time for the handful of projects that DOC has currently evaluated: however, it should not be disregarded that AB 1156 changes the information that the DOC must look at to include information on water availability, and requires DOC to consult with GSAs in determining the land's eligibility for a SUE. Putting a timeline on the DOC while expanding the information they must consider and also making them reliant on consultation with other agencies may impede the department's ability to conduct a sufficiently thorough site selection.

   What happens in the instance where DOC does not make a determination? Existing law specifies that the DOC *may* make a determination of site eligibility for SUEs: however, under AB 1156, if the DOC does not do so, then the site is deemed eligible after 120 days. Taken in conjunction with AB 1156 waiving CEQA review for DOC's determination of site eligibility, a site could be deemed eligible for SUE without any analytical environmental review or required public transparency or engagement.

   On the other hand, AB 1156's 120-day timeline may not reach the objective it seeks to achieve, since DOC may reject applications for site eligibility as incomplete, rather than approving them or allowing them to become approved by default.

   The author and committee may wish to take amendments to address these concerns by specifying that the DOC shall, rather than may, evaluate projects for site eligibility, and establishing a process by which the DOC will request additional information for incomplete site eligibility applications and retain the 120-day timeline by which DOC must make a determination or have the site deemed eligible for an SUE.

5) *Without mitigation, going solar may be a one-way street*. Solar energy generation has the potential to impact soil fertility by decreasing nutrients, soil organic matter and water retention. Some evidence suggests that solar energy on farmland also increases runoff and erosion risk. These changes could impact overall soil fertility. If soil is no longer viable as farmland –either physically

viable, or no longer economically viable given a diminishment of the soil quality—then the fundamental premise of an 'easement' and the WA's intent of preserving farmland for future use is undercut.

Existing law addresses these concerns by specifically allowing deed restrictions to require mitigation measures on the land or land surrounding the parcel used for a SUE. AB 1156 however would remove that explicit authorization: while local governments would still have the ability to require mitigation measures, they may be less likely to think to make that requirement if it is not included in statute.

The author and committee may wish to strike the provision that removes local government's ability to require mitigation for sites used for SUEs, and specify that mitigation measures must be relevant and proportional to impacts of the SUE.

6) *Who is the community that benefits?* AB 1156 requires solar developers to enter into a community benefits agreements with local jurisdictions. Amendments taken in the Senate Local Government Committee expand the community benefits agreement so that eligible actions include:

- Job creation and training programs for local residents or farm workers.
- Financial contributions that benefit Farm Youth Training Programs or Agricultural Trade Programs.
- Financial contributions to community projects for groundwater recharge and/or water conservation programs.
- Financial contributions that benefit land preservation.
- Financial contributions to agricultural innovation research.
- Financial contributions that benefit workers displaced by water scarcity impacting agricultural jobs.

While solar projects on farmland are most likely to impact farmers and farm workers, as reflected in the current community benefits agreement, there may be other nearby residents that are also impacted.

Solar farms can decrease property value for nearby residents: one large-scale study of 1,500 large scale solar projects and over 1.8 million home transactions found that homes within 0.5 mi of a large scale solar projects experience an average home price reduction of 1.5% compared to homes 2–4 mi away[6].

[6] Elmallah, S., Hoen, B., Fujita, K. S., Robson, D., & Brunner, E. (2023). Shedding light on large-scale solar impacts: An analysis of property values and proximity to photovoltaics across six US states. *Energy Policy*, *175*, 113425.

According to another study on the impacts of solar farms on housing prices in Massachusetts and Rhode Island:
"homes within 0.6 miles of a utility-scale solar array experience a depreciation of 1.5% - 3.6%, equating to a reduction in value between $4,721 and $11,330 (2019 dollars). This impact is particularly significant in rural areas, where the installation of solar arrays on farm and forest lands impacts the open space and rural character that contribute to the desirability of these locations. In rural locations, this analysis estimates 2.5% - 5.8% reduction in housing value associated with the installation of a utility-scale solar farm within 0.6 miles[7]."

Nearby communities would also be affected in worst-case scenarios, such as a battery fire (AB 1156 specifically allows on-site energy storage for SEUs). Battery fires can have extremely harmful impacts, as evidenced in the recent January 2025 moss landing battery storage fire in Monterey county, which released smoke containing hydrogen fluoride and heavy metals among other toxic substances. Approximately 1,500 people[8] were told to evacuate in response to the fire, and some residents in the area have reported health issues that they claim are related to the fire. Following the fire, researchers have found unusually high concentrations of toxic heavy metals in surface soils at the nearby Elkhorn Slough Reserve in Moss Landing, including levels of nickel, manganese, and cobalt that were hundreds to 1,000 times higher than baseline[9].

The author and committee may wish to specify that the solar developer outreach and engage with nearby residents, according to specified procedures, when developing a community benefits agreement and authorize the community benefits agreement to include financial benefits for community improvements.

7) *Findings and declarations.* In addition to the proposed committee amendments, the author also wishes to clarify the intent of this Legislation in findings and declarations which include:

- ***California has set an ambitious path to achieve a zero net carbon economy by 2045. The 2022 California Air Resource Board (CARB) Scoping Plan calls for California to cut air pollution by 71 percent and reduce fossil fuel consumption by 86 percent.***

[7] Gaur, V., & Lang, C. (2023). House of the rising sun: The effect of utility-scale solar arrays on housing prices. *Energy Economics*, *122*, 106699.
[8] Fire at one of the world's largest battery plants forces evacuations in California. AP. JANUARY 17, 2025
[9] Scientists Detect Heavy Metals in Environmentally Sensitive Elkhorn Slough After Battery Storage Plant Fire | SJSU NewsCenter

- ***The 100 Percent Clean Energy Act of 2018 (SB 100, Chapter 312 of the Statutes of 2018) updated the California Renewables Portfolio Standard Program to ensure that by 2030 at least 60 percent of California's electricity is renewable and for California to provide 100 percent of its retail sales from zero emission sources by 2045.***

- ***Central to this effort is the significant acceleration of renewable energy deployment, particularly utility-scale solar, which state planners expect should grow by 20,000 megawatts by 2035, with a total of at least 62,000 megawatts added to the grid by 2045 to meet the state's decarbonization goals.***

- ***Concurrently, the state has established a "30X30" plan to conserve 30% of land and water from development.***

- ***California has similarly adopted a policy to protect and sustainably manage groundwater resources in the state. The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (Part 2.74 (commencing with Section 10720) of Division 6 of the Water Code) mandates that local water management agencies bring groundwater use to sustainable levels by the early 2040s.***

- ***It is estimated that 1 million acres of farmland in the San Joaquin Valley, alone, are expected to be fallowed by 2040.***

- ***California farmers may require new revenue tools to maintain water-fallowed areas of their farms; temporary use of land for solar projects is one revenue tool to preserve the state's farms.***

- ***There is value in incentivizing solar in least conflict areas while facilitating achievement of our state's renewable mandates.***

- ***A suspension of the Williamson Act for solar use will result in local revenue benefits attributable to a higher rate of property tax on the land and taxation of any new property improvement.***

- ***An exception to Williamson Act suspension, which allows temporary use of land for solar, may be even more beneficial to local communities if combined with a community benefit agreement with local community groups, uniquely deployed only in conjunction with a Williamson suspension.***

- ***In requiring community benefit agreements specifically in conjunction with a Williamson Act suspension, it is not the intent of the Legislature to create a new, universal tool for land use policy.***

8) *Committee amendments.* ***Staff recommends the committee adopt the bolded amendments contained in 4, 5, 6 and 7.***

Related/Prior Legislation
AB 2528 (Arambula, 2024) would have provided an avenue for cancellation of Williamson Act contracts on agricultural land to be used for specified energy infrastructure. AB 2528 was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Status: Held in the Assembly Committee on Appropriations.

AB 580 (Bennett, 2023) directed the CPUC to consult relevant state agencies about challenges to developing zero-emission energy infrastructure using grant funding from the DOC's Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program. Status: Held – Assembly Committee on Appropriations.

SB 688 (Padilla, 2023) required the CEC to award grants for agrivoltaic system projects to support research and development in agrivoltaic systems, conduct an evaluation of the grant program, as specified, and publish the evaluation on the CEC website, contingent upon an appropriation from the Legislature. Status: Held – Assembly Committee on Appropriations.

SB 574 (Laird) narrowed the role of the DOC in administering the Williamson Act. Status: Chapter 644, Statutes of 2021.

SB 618 (Wolk) authorizes a city or county and a landowner to simultaneously rescind a Williamson Act contract on marginally productive or physically impaired lands and enter into a solar-use easement that restricts the use of land to photovoltaic solar facilities, as specified. Status: Chapter 596, Statutes of 2011.

SOURCE:

SUPPORT:

Aes Corporation
American Clean Power Association
Arevon
Avantus
Aypa Power Development LLC

California Solar Energy Industries Association
California State Association of Electrical Workers
California State Building and Construction Trades Council
California State Council of Laborers
Candela Renewables
Clearway Energy Group LLC
Coalition of California Utility Employees
Edpr Na, LLC
Forebay Farms
Independent Energy Producers Association
Intersect Power
Invenergy Renewables LLC
Large-scale Solar Association
Leeward Renewable Energy
Longroad Energy Management, LLC
Materra
New Leaf Energy, INC.
Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC)
Rwe
Singh Farms
Terra-gen Development Company, LLC
Union of Concerned Scientists
Vf&b Farms
OPPOSITION:

American Farmland Trust
California Alliance With Family Farmers
California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF)
California Climate & Agricultural Network (CALCAN)
California Farm Bureau Federation
California Farmland Trust
California Farmlink
California Rangeland Trust

-- END --