

THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 1960
Author: Bennett (D), et al.
Amended: 6/25/26 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE NATURAL RES. & WATER COMMITTEE: 5-0, 6/23/26

AYES: Becker, Seyarto, Allen, Laird, Stern

NO VOTE RECORDED: Cabaldon, Grove

SENATE EMERGENCY MGT. COMMITTEE: 7-0, 6/30/26

AYES: Stern, Seyarto, Allen, Ashby, Blakespear, Grayson, Pérez

NO VOTE RECORDED: Dahle, Rubio

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 8/13/26

AYES: Cervantes, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 70-2, 5/21/26 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Wildfire Prevention Grants Program: identified cohesive fire communities

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: This bill 1) authorizes the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Department) to disburse funds appropriated for the Wildfire Prevention Grants Program to identified cohesive fire communities that partner with fire safe councils to use for activities related to hazardous fuel reduction, wildfire prevention planning, and wildfire prevention education; and 2) requires the Department, commencing with the 2028-29 fiscal year, to prioritize disadvantaged cohesive fire communities.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Encourages cost-effective structure hardening and retrofitting that creates fire-resistant homes, businesses, and public buildings.
- 2) Facilitates vegetation management, the creation and maintenance of defensible space, and other fuel modification activities that provide neighborhood or communitywide benefits against wildfire (Government Code (GOV) §8654.4).
- 3) States that the California Wildfire Mitigation Program (CWMP) is required to submit a report to the Legislature by July 1, 2028 regarding the implementation of the program including:
 - a) The cost effectiveness of the program, compared to similar programs.
 - b) Evaluation of the overall risk mitigation achieved statewide.
 - c) Information regarding barriers to completing the work.
- 4) Sunsets CWMP on July 1, 2029.

This bill:

- 1) Defines an “identified cohesive fire community” as a community, as defined in (GOV §65302.10(a)(1)), that has reached a certain percentage of homes certified by a home hardening certification program pursuant to a home hardening certification program developed by an independent, 501(c)(3) nonprofit scientific research and communications organization supported by property insurers, reinsurers, and affiliated companies.
 - a) In the 2028–29 and 2029–30 fiscal years, inclusive, 10 percent of homes certified as hardened.
 - b) In the 2030–31 to 2032–33 fiscal years, inclusive, 30 percent of homes certified as hardened.
 - c) In the 2033–34 and following fiscal years, inclusive, 50 percent of homes certified as hardened.
- 2) Requires a state agency, if they adopt a home hardening certification program, to adopt timeframes and minimum percentage thresholds that are comparable to the timeframes and minimum percentage thresholds described above.
- 3) Specifies that a community that qualified as an identified cohesive fire community pursuant to a third-party certification program shall retain its status as such upon the development of a certification program by a state agency.

- 4) Requires state and private certification programs to be based on objective, verifiable, and periodically reviewed wildfire mitigation criteria supported by publicly available methodology and data.
- 5) Authorizes the Department, commencing with the 2028-29 fiscal year, to disburse funds appropriated for the Wildfire Prevention Grants Program to identified cohesive fire communities that partner with fire safe councils to use for activities related to hazardous fuels reduction, wildfire prevention planning, and wildfire prevention education, among other activities.
- 6) Specifies that, for the purposes of the Wildfire Prevention Grants Program distribution, a fire safe council shall be the entity the applies to the department for grant funding and receives and manages any awarded funding.
- 7) Requires disadvantaged identified cohesive fire communities to be awarded preference pursuant to the Department's established procedures for prioritizing disadvantaged applicants for the Wildfire Prevention Grants Program.

Comments

Wildfire Prevention Grants. Administered by the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Department), the Wildfire Prevention Grants Program funds projects in and near fire threatened communities to improve public health and safety while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Home hardening. The Department and California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) are authorized to enter into a joint powers agreement to administer a Wildfire Mitigation Financial Assistance Program, known as the California Wildfire Mitigation Program (CWMP).

Incentivizing individual home hardening. This bill would provide an incentive for individual homeowners to undertake work to harden their home, by providing for a hardened community to be eligible for grants that may further protect their neighborhood from wildfire.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- By authorizing the Department to provide wildfire prevention grants to identified cohesive fire communities (ICFCs) that partner with fire safe councils, and providing that disadvantaged ICFCs receive preference under CalFire's established procedures for prioritizing disadvantaged applicants, this bill would create cost pressures of an unknown amount possibly in the hundreds

of thousands to low millions of dollars annually, on the wildfire prevention grant program (General Fund, special fund such as the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund [GGRF], or bond funds such as the Proposition 4 climate bond) to the extent there is increased demand for funding from eligible communities.

- The Department reports its administrative costs to implement this bill are absorbable within existing resources.

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/13/26)

Alameda County Board of Supervisors
 Berkeley; City of
 California Fire Chiefs Association
 Consumer Watchdog
 Fire Aside, Inc
 Fire Districts Association of California
 Matador Fire
 Megafire Action
 Orange County Fire Authority

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/13/26)

None received

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: According to the author, “Last year, we watched entire communities destroyed by ferocious wildfires. As California continues to grapple with more frequent, intense, and destructive wildfires, we need to ensure whole neighborhoods won’t be decimated. AB 1960 allows CAL FIRE to disperse Wildfire Prevention Grant funding to communities that have reached at least a certain number of homes hardened. This bill incentivizes California’s communities to reduce risk together, rather than one home at a time. Through strategic planning, retrofitting, and engagement, Californians will decrease property loss and become more resilient in the face of climate change.”

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 70-2, 5/21/26

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ransom, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers,

Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria,
Stefani, Ta, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Zbur, Rivas

NOES: Hadwick, Tangipa

NO VOTE RECORDED: Arambula, Chen, Gallagher, Garcia, Lackey, Ramos,
Celeste Rodriguez, Wilson

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