

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING

AB 2037 (Patterson)

As Amended May 18, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Upon appropriation, establishes the Wildfire Mitigation Aging and Disability Grant Pilot Program (Pilot Program) to be administered by the California Department of Aging (CDA) through the specified area agencies on aging (AAA).

Major Provisions

- 1) Establishes the Pilot Program in:
 - a) AAA Area 4 a nonprofit joint powers authority serving Nevada, Placer, Sacramento, Sierra, Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba Counties;
 - b) AAA Area 29 a county run AAA serving El Dorado County; and,
 - c) AAA Area 33 a county run AAA serving Kern County.
- 2) Awards grants based on specific criteria to older adults and people with disabilities to mitigate against wildfires on properties they own that they would not otherwise be able to protect using existing resources.
- 3) Requires the designated AAAs to award grants on a competitive basis.
- 4) Requires applications to contain specified information including proof of need.
- 5) Authorizes the grant funding to be used towards costs associated with hiring contractors or other qualified service providers to perform wildfire mitigation activities.
- 6) Requires the AAAs to retain specified information and report the information to CDA upon the completion of the Pilot Program, including the number of applicants and the amount distributed.

COMMENTS

As floods, earthquakes and wildfires, as well as other natural disasters continue to plague California from coasts to deserts and north to south, we continue to identify how well we provide services to older adults.

In recent years, California has experienced an increase in the frequency and severity of wildfires, and experts project that these events will continue to occur more frequently.¹ Consequently, the state will likely need to protect its residents more often and from more dangerous natural disasters in the future than it has in the past.

¹ <https://wildfiretaskforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/californiawildfireandforestresilienceactionplan.pdf>

A scholarly article from the National Institute of Health (NIH) reports on the social vulnerability of the people exposed to wildfires in U.S. West Coast states². The report used an index from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to assess the social vulnerability of populations exposed to wildfire from 2000–2021 in California, Oregon, and Washington, which accounted for 90% of exposures in the western United States. The results emphasize the importance of integrating the vulnerability of at-risk populations in wildfire mitigation and adaptation plans.

CDA administers programs serving older adults through contracts with local agencies in 33 locations across the state which provide a wide array of services on a community level to seniors and adults with disabilities. AAAs are designated to address the needs and concerns of older adults at the regional and local level. Each county is required to have an AAA to ensure all communities have access to local aging programs and provide information and services for older adults. While California is home to 58 counties, not all counties have a stand-alone AAA. Some AAAs represent multiple counties to serve the region.

California's Aging Network (CAN) consists of CDA and the 33 AAAs. It is a greater than 50 year-old network. In 2022, the "California 2030" program was launched to develop tactics and strategies to prepare CAN for the future. California 2030 report was published in 2024 with recommendations for CAN. This report laid out the eight traits of an ideal future-ready CAN. Some of the traits associated with AB 2307 include:

- 1) *Inclusive and Equitable*: It addresses ageism, ableism, racism, and implicit biases. Manages resources and programs to meet Californians' evolving needs, ensuring equitable distribution and reach across populations and rural and isolated geographies.
- 2) *Locally Responsive*: It adapts and develops services, practices, and programs to address community-specific needs and opportunities.

According to the Author

"Wildfires continue to plague California. In the midst of this crisis, it is imperative that the state help the most vulnerable, specifically older adults and individuals with disabilities, to prepare for these wildfires. Mitigation measures have been shown to have an immense benefit not only for the homes that use them, but even for entire neighborhoods. However, our most vulnerable communities are also least able to mitigate for wildfires on their properties. By providing a grant program, AB 2037 ensures older adults and individuals with disabilities can prepare their properties for fires, helping to protect them and their communities from the devastating effects of these disasters."

Arguments in Support

California Fire Chiefs Association (CalChiefs) and the Fire Districts Association of California (FDAC), write in support "Wildfires disproportionately impact seniors and individuals with disabilities, particularly those living in moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones. Many of these residents lack the physical or financial capacity to complete critical mitigation work such as vegetation management, defensible space creation, debris removal, or basic home hardening."

² https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10511185/pdf/sciadv.adh4615.pdf?utm_source=consensus

Arguments in Opposition

None.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Committee on Appropriations, General Fund (GF) cost pressure to provide funding for the grants and CDA administrative costs to implement and manage the program.

For implementation, CDA estimates GF costs of \$626,000 in fiscal year (FY) 2027-28, and \$476,000 in FY 2028-29 and FY 2029-30. These costs include (a) one-time first year costs of \$150,000 to conduct targeted educational outreach to inform eligible individuals regarding the availability of the pilot program, and application procedures, and (b) ongoing costs of \$476,000 annually for the duration of the pilot for three additional CDA staff to develop, lead, and manage the proposed pilot program, in consultation with the AAAs. Although the pilot program ends on January 1, 2030, CDA anticipates the need to maintain the identified staffing until the end of FY 2029-30 to successfully wind down the program.

CDA estimated the above costs prior to Area 33 (Kern County) being added to the bill. An updated cost estimate may be slightly higher.

VOTES**ASM AGING AND LONG-TERM CARE: 6-0-1**

YES: Bains, Ellis, Arambula, Patterson, Blanca Rubio, Sharp-Collins

ABS, ABST OR NV: Ávila Farías

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-0

YES: Wicks, Hoover, Aguiar-Curry, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

UPDATED

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