

THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 2483
Author: Elhawary (D), et al.
Amended: 6/24/26 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE NATURAL RES. & WATER COMMITTEE: 7-0, 6/23/26
AYES: Becker, Seyarto, Allen, Cabaldon, Grove, Laird, Stern

SENATE LABOR, PUB. EMP. & RET. COMMITTEE: 5-0, 7/1/26
AYES: Smallwood-Cuevas, Strickland, Cortese, Durazo, Laird

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 8/13/26
AYES: Cervantes, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 77-0, 5/26/26 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Wildland firefighters: Formerly Incarcerated Firefighter Certification
and Employment Program

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: This bill requires the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Department) to implement a standardized process to ensure that all eligible individuals in the Conservation Camp program receive official written certification reflective of the training they've received, and award hiring preference under Fire Fighter I Category Placement 2 to qualified formerly incarcerated individuals.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the Conservation Camp Program (Public Resources Code (PRC) §§ 4951, 4952).

- a) The inmates and wards assigned to the Conservation Camp program may perform fire prevention, fire control, and other work of the Department, or under an agreement, with a local, state, or federal agency or qualified nonprofit organization (PRC § 4953).
 - b) Conservation Camp inmates and wards may be utilized in the rescue of lost or injured persons, the saving of life, and the protection of property, watershed revegetation, and work necessary to prevent flood damage to land after a fire (PRC § 4957).
 - c) Conservation Camp inmates and wards may perform work to prevent flood damage to land resulting from levee breaks or overflows (PRC § 4958).
- 2) Establishes the Division of Apprenticeship Standards within the California Apprenticeship Council (Division) (Labor Code (LAB) § 3070). The Division shall issue rules and regulations which establish standards for firefighter occupations, as those occupations are submitted by the California Firefighter Joint Apprenticeship Committee (CAL-JAC) (PRC § 3071).

This bill:

- 1) Establishes the Formerly Incarcerated Firefighter Certificate and Employment Program:
 - a) Requires the Department, on and after July 1, 2027, and in partnership with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and the CCC, implement a standardized process to ensure that all eligible individuals receive official written certification, reflective of the training completed in a Department firefighting training camp while incarcerated.
 - b) Requires the certificate to include information regarding the individual's training towards meeting the minimum requirements for Fire Fighter I Classification or Forestry Technician Classification.
- 2) Requires the Department, on and after January 1, 2028, to award hiring preference to qualified formerly incarcerated individuals applying for a Fire Fighter I classification, or any successor classifications, under Category Placement 2.
- 3) Specifies that nothing precludes the Department from placing a formerly incarcerated person in a higher category for hiring.
- 4) Specifies that nothing precludes agencies with wildland management responsibilities from establishing similar hiring pathways.
- 5) Defines the term "qualified formerly incarcerated individual."

Background

California Conservation Camp Program. The Legislature created the California Conservation Camp program to provide for the training and use of inmates and wards assigned to incarceration in CDCR to perform public conservation projects, including, but not limited to, forest fire prevention and control, forest and watershed management, recreation, fish and game management, soil conservation, and forest and watershed revegetation (PRC § 4951). Conservation Camps receive prisoners committed to the custody of CDCR and are supervised by employees of the Department (PRC § 4952).

Appropriate categories for earned experience. Entry-level firefighters at the Department are granted the civil service classification of Fire Fighter I. Successful applicants to the Department's Fire Fighter I classification are placed into one of four categories depending on their experiences:

Category 0: The applicant has returnee rights to a Department Unit.

Category 1: The applicant is considered "fully trained" and has provided an acceptable document showing completion of all of the required training.

Category 2: The applicant is considered "partially trained" and has provided an acceptable document showing completion of at least one of the required trainings, or one of the desirable trainings.

Category 3: The applicant has not provided acceptable documentation for any of the required trainings, or desirable trainings.

Related Legislation

AB 1380 (Elhawary, 2025) would have required the Department to implement a standardized process to ensure that all individuals who complete the Department's FFT training while incarcerated receive official written certification. The bill would also require the Department to track and report the outcomes of the certification program and report annually to the Legislature. This bill was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

AB 409 (Weber, 2023) would have required the Department to establish rules that provide eligibility priority rankings for formerly incarcerated individuals who earned certifications through the California Conservation Camp program. This bill was held in the Assembly Natural Resources Committee.

AB 1908 (Maienschein, 2022) would have required a formerly incarcerated individual who completed the California Conservation Camp program to be eligible for a firefighter certificate provided by the Department. This bill was held in the Assembly Public Safety Committee.

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

- CalFire estimates costs of \$670,000 in the first year and about \$568,000 annually thereafter (General Fund) to document, process, track, and create certifications for incarcerated individuals who successfully complete Conservation Camp firefighter training, and to acquire and maintain specialized equipment including electronic tablets.
- CDCR anticipates minor and absorbable workload costs as a result of this bill (General Fund), with the majority of workload and associated fiscal impacts falling to CalFire. To the extent CDCR would be required to provide additional training or licensing to meet the minimum requirements for the Fire Fighter 1 or Forestry Technician classifications, the department anticipates additional associated costs of an unknown amount.

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/13/26)

Forestry Fire and Recruitment Program (co-sponsor)
Michelson Center for Public Policy (co-sponsor)
Prosecutors Alliance Action (co-sponsor)
California Association of Local Conservation Corps
Center for Employment Opportunities
Redefine Alliance
Vera Institute of Justice

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/13/26)

None received

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: According to the author, “AB 2483 is a restorative justice measure that creates a real path to employment for formerly incarcerated individuals who trained and served in California’s fire camps. Despite gaining hands-on experience fighting wildfires alongside [the Department], these individuals are often released without certification and shut out of the very workforce they helped sustain.

“By requiring [the Department] and CDCR to issue formal certification and prioritizing the hiring of qualified former fire camp participants, AB 2483 invests in rehabilitation, reduces recidivism, strengthens our firefighting workforce, and promotes equity by ensuring that those most impacted by the justice system have the opportunity to serve their communities with dignity.”

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION: None received.

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 77-0, 5/26/26

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, 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, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NO VOTE RECORDED: Muratsuchi, Ramos, Celeste Rodriguez

Prepared by: Edith Hannigan / N.R. & W. / (916) 651-4116
8/15/26 15:58:19

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