

Date of Hearing: April 20, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES  
Isaac G. Bryan, Chair  
AB 2635 (Celeste Rodriguez) – As Amended April 13, 2026

**SUBJECT:** Air pollution: small off-road engines: voucher programs: local regulation

**SUMMARY:** Requires large and medium air districts, as defined, to offer commercial vouchers for zero-emission small off-road equipment (SORE), as specified. Prohibits districts from collecting or disclosing specified information from applicants. Prohibits a local government from adopting or enforcing an ordinance prohibiting the use of SORE unless the local government offers SORE vouchers to landscapers, as specified. Limits penalties for violations of local ordinances, as specified.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Establishes the Air Resources Board (ARB) as the air pollution control agency in California and requires ARB, among other things, to control emissions from a wide array of mobile sources and coordinate with local air districts to control emissions from stationary sources in order to implement the federal Clean Air Act (CAA). (Health and Safety Code (HSC) 39000 *et seq.*)
- 2) Requires, subject to the powers and duties of ARB, air districts to adopt and enforce rules and regulations to achieve and maintain the state and federal air quality standards in all areas affected by emission sources under their jurisdiction, and to enforce all applicable provisions of state and federal law. (HSC 40001)
- 3) Requires ARB to adopt cost-effective and technologically feasible regulations to prohibit engine exhaust and evaporative emissions from new SORE, to apply to engines produced on or after January 1, 2024, or as soon as ARB determines is feasible, whichever is later. (HSC 43018.11(a))
- 4) ARB regulations define SORE as follows:

“Small off-road engine” means any engine that produces a gross horsepower less than 25 horsepower (at or below 19 kilowatts for 2005 and later model year), or is designed (e.g., through fuel feed, valve timing, etc.) to produce less than 25 horsepower (at or below 19 kilowatts for 2005 and later model year), that is not used to propel a licensed on-road motor vehicle, an off-road motorcycle, an all-terrain vehicle, a marine vessel, a snowmobile, a model airplane, a model car, or a model boat. If an engine family has models below 25 horsepower (at or below 19 kilowatts) and models at or above 25 horsepower (above 19 kilowatts), only the models under 25 horsepower (at or below 19 kilowatts) would be considered small off-road engines. Uses for small off-road engines include, but are not limited to, applications such as lawn mowers, weed trimmers, chain saws, golf carts, specialty vehicles, generators and pumps. All engines and equipment that fall within the scope of the preemption of Section 209(e)(1)(A) of the Federal Clean Air Act, as amended, and as defined by regulation of the Environmental Protection Agency, are specifically not included within this category. Any compression-ignition

engine, as defined in Section 2421, produced during the 2000 and later model years shall not be defined as a small off-road engine.

(The CAA prohibits states from enforcing emission control standards on engines smaller than 175 horsepower used in farm or construction equipment or vehicles.)

- 5) Requires ARB to identify, and, to the extent feasible, make available, funding for commercial rebates or similar incentive funding as part of any updates to existing, applicable funding program guidelines for air districts to implement to support the transition to zero-emission SORE operation. (HSC 43018.11(b))
- 6) Establishes the Carl Moyer Memorial Air Quality Standards Attainment Program (Moyer Program), administered by ARB and air districts, to fund the incremental cost of cleaner-than-required vehicles, engines, and equipment. The primary objective of the program is to achieve air quality emission reductions that would not otherwise occur through regulations or other legal mandates. The Moyer Program is funded by vehicle registration surcharges and tire fees. (HSC 44275 *et seq.*)

**THIS BILL:**

- 1) Requires each “large” and “medium” air district, no later than January 1, 2028, to implement and maintain a commercial voucher program to support the transition to zero-emission small off-road equipment, and imposes the following conditions on districts:
  - a) Recognize and accept alternative forms of documentation in place of a business license for eligibility verification.
  - b) Not require that a business hold a business license for a minimum period before submitting an application.
  - c) Establish low-burden procedures to review and verify any required documentation in a manner that is equitable for landscapers, and provide language assistance when requested.
  - d) Offer vouchers covering at least 85% of eligible costs of zero-emission equipment.
  - e) Not inquire into or collect information about an individual’s immigration or citizenship status or place of birth.
  - f) Not inquire into or collect information or documentation regarding an individual’s criminal history, and not require an applicant to submit fingerprints, complete a LiveScan fingerprinting, or submit to a background check as part of an application for a voucher.
  - g) Not provide voluntary consent, except as otherwise required by state or federal law, to any individual to access, review, or obtain any of the records obtained in connection with a SORE voucher program that include personally identifiable information of any voucher participants without a subpoena or judicial warrant.

- h) Not disclose or provide in writing, verbally, or in any other manner, personally identifiable information of any voucher participant, except pursuant to a subpoena or a valid judicial warrant.
- 2) Requires any “small rural” district or local government that adopts a SORE voucher program to comply with the above requirements.
- 3) Requires a nonpublic entity administering a SORE voucher program under contract with large or medium district to explicitly agree to adhere to the above requirements.
- 4) Prohibits a local government from adopting or enforcing an ordinance that prohibits the use of SORE landscaping equipment unless the local government implements an incentive voucher program that provides vouchers covering at least 85% of eligible costs.
- 5) Prohibits punishing a violation of a local SORE ordinance as an infraction or misdemeanor, and prohibits a person from being subject to arrest for an alleged violation of the ordinance. Limits enforcement for violations of a local ordinance to the following:
  - a) A written warning for a first violation.
  - b) An administrative fine not exceeding \$100 for a second violation within one year of the first violation.
  - c) An administrative fine not exceeding \$200 for each additional violation within one year of the first violation.
  - d) Requires consideration of the person’s ability to pay the fine. Requires the local government to provide the person with notice of their right to request an ability-to-pay determination and make available instructions or other materials for requesting an ability-to-pay determination. Authorizes the person to request an ability-to-pay determination at adjudication or while the judgment remains unpaid, including when a case is delinquent or has been referred to a comprehensive collection program.
  - e) Authorizes the local government to allow the person to complete community service in lieu of paying the total administrative fine, waive the administrative fine, or offer an alternative disposition.
- 6) Establishes definitions for purposes of the bill, including:
  - a) “Large district” means a district with a population of 1,000,000 or more.
  - b) “Medium district” means a district with a population of less than 1,000,000 that is not a small rural district.
  - c) “Small off-road engine landscaping equipment” means small off-road engine equipment commonly used in landscaping operations, including lawn and garden equipment such as lawn mowers, leaf blowers, trimmers, weed whackers, aerators, chainsaws, edgers, and other turf care tools. Small off-road engine landscaping equipment does not include golf

carts, specialty vehicles, generators, pumps, and logging, airport ground support, and other small utility equipment.

- d) “Small rural district” means a district with a population of less than 1,000,000 and that is designated as rural by the California Air Pollution Control Officers Association consistent with the following criteria:
- i) A small rural district is typically characterized by a smaller population base relative to medium and large districts.
  - ii) A small rural district has limited staffing and administrative capacity relative to medium and large districts.

7) Makes related findings.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown

**COMMENTS:**

- 1) **Background.** SORE emissions have been regulated since 1990, when exhaust and evaporative emission standards for SORE were first adopted by ARB. Following passage of AB 1346 (Berman), Chapter 753, Statutes of 2021, ARB adopted zero emission standards for SORE. It is important to note that ARB’s emission standards apply only to manufacture of new equipment for sale or import into California. These regulations do not regulate the use of existing SORE equipment.

On a separate track, local governments in California have adopted ordinances to ban or restrict the use of lawn and garden equipment, primarily leaf blowers, dating back to the 1970s, based on local concerns about noise, but also air pollution, including exhaust and evaporative emissions associated with gas equipment, as well as fugitive dust created by all mechanical leaf blowers, gas and electric.

AB 1346 required ARB to identify funding for commercial rebates. In 2021, the Legislature appropriated \$30 million in the Budget Act to provide incentives to small-business professional landscapers. Incentive funding was administered through the Clean Off-Road Equipment Voucher Incentive Project (CORE), with 1,906 products from 23 manufacturers in a dozen equipment categories available for point-of-sale vouchers. CORE-eligible landscaping equipment ranged from backpack leaf blowers to riding lawnmowers, as well as additional batteries and chargers. Requests for voucher applications began in September 2022 and available funding was exhausted by October 2023. In 2025, about \$6.7 million in vouchers remained unredeemed. An additional round for voucher requests opened on March 26, 2025. Within 24 hours, all remaining funds had been requested. As of March 1, 2026, over 99.5 percent of all voucher funding has been distributed. This has reduced the up-front costs for professional landscapers in California for nearly 30,000 pieces of commercially available zero-emission landscape equipment, and almost 70,000 pieces when including additional batteries and chargers. Overall, 18 percent of voucher funding went to purchases by sole proprietorships. The strong interest from California’s professional landscapers to use zero-emission equipment is reflected in voucher demand and the range of eligible SORE equipment.

At least 16 of the 35 air districts in California offer SORE rebates for commercial equipment. These 16 districts include the largest districts, which together comprise at least 85% of the state's population. These existing rebate programs likely would require updates to meet the requirements of this bill. By adding administrative complexity and costs, plus high minimum voucher amounts, this bill may reduce the number of SORE equipment deployed via rebates or vouchers. The bill provides no funding to match its mandate. If districts are forced to turn to existing funding sources, they could use Moyer Program funds. However, there is intense competition for those funds, and using Moyer funds for SORE vouchers may diminish more cost-effective uses, such as replacing heavy-duty on and off-road diesel equipment.

2) **Author's statement:**

California has set ambitious clean air goals, but we must also be clear about what compliance means for the workers whose livelihoods are at stake. Landscapers are essential to our communities, yet many are low-wage workers being asked to transition to costly new equipment without consistent or accessible support. In some areas, incentive programs are not available, and in others, requirements such as business licenses can exclude informal workers. At the same time, local bans are imposing fines that can escalate quickly, even when workers lack the resources to comply.

AB 2635 is intended to make this transition more equitable. It requires air districts to provide voucher programs covering 85–100% of the cost of zero-emission equipment, removes barriers that limit access to those programs, and ensures enforcement does not outpace available support. It also establishes a clear, time-limited transition framework that provides workers with a realistic path to compliance. This approach aligns the state's clean air goals with the realities facing workers being asked to transition to costly alternatives within a short timeframe.

3) **The bill places prohibitive voucher requirements on new local ordinances, and appears to prohibit enforcement of both new and existing local ordinances.** This bill prohibits a local government from adopting or enforcing an ordinance that prohibits the use of SORE landscaping equipment unless the local government implements an incentive voucher program that provides vouchers covering at least 85% of eligible costs. By imposing this condition, without providing funding, the bill will significantly raise the bar for cities implementing local ordinances. This provision also creates the circumstance where a city and air district must both offer 85% vouchers in the same jurisdiction, without reconciling the two mandates.

4) **Suggested amendments.** *The author and the committee may wish to consider the following amendments:*

a) To assure that, if air districts do not receive new funding for this bill, use of existing funds for SORE vouchers does not compromise more cost-effective uses of these funds, add the following:

*Unless the district is using funds appropriated specifically for purposes of implementing this section, the district shall assure that any existing district incentive funds used to implement this section achieve emissions reductions that are cost-effective relative to existing allowable uses of the funds.*

- b) To assure that local governments are not required to implement duplicative SORE vouchers in jurisdictions where they are already available from air districts, add language to permit local governments to adopt SORE restrictions by ordinance if the local air district offers commercial vouchers pursuant to this bill.

## **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

### **Support**

Alliance for a Better Community  
Altcap California  
Border Angels  
Buen Vecino  
California Coalition for Community Investment (CCCI)  
California Electric Transportation Coalition  
California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA) Action  
California Immigrant Policy Center  
Cameo Network  
Central American Resource Center - CareCen - of California  
Central Valley Immigrant Integration Collaborative  
Centro Community Hispanic Association  
Centro Laboral De Graton  
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)  
First Community Capital, INC.  
Five Rivers Loan Fund, INC.  
Immigrants Rising  
Inclusive Action for the City  
Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice  
Inner City Struggle  
Kiwa  
LA Forward Institute  
Latino Coalition for a Healthy California  
Los Angeles Economic Equity Accelerator and Fellowship (LEEAF)  
Moreno Seeds Foundation  
Multicultural Institute  
National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON)  
Nuevo Sol Day Labor & Domestic Worker Center  
Orale: Organizing Rooted in Abolition, Liberation, and Empowerment  
Pacific Community Ventures  
Pasadena Community Job Center  
Pilipino Workers Center of Southern California  
Pomona Economic Opportunity Center  
Public Counsel  
Salva  
San Diego Immigrant Rights Consortium  
Somos Familia Valle  
South Asian Network  
St John's Community Health  
Street Level Health Project

Thai Community Development Center  
The Los Angeles Tool Library  
The Translatin@ Coalition  
Urban Visionaries  
Vera California  
Worksafe

**Opposition**

1 Individual  
350 Humboldt  
7th Generation Advisors  
Active San Gabriel Valley  
Ban Gas Leaf Blowers San Jose  
California Air Pollution Control Officers Association  
Cleaneearth4kids.org  
Coalition for Clean Air  
Healing and Justice Center  
League of Women Voters of Sacramento County  
Lucita INC  
Nature for All  
Quiet Clean San Mateo  
Sacramento Splash  
San Francisco Bay Physicians for Social Responsibility  
Santa Cruz Coalition for a Healthy & Safe Environment  
Santa Monica Safe Streets Alliance  
Santa Monica Spoke  
SMUD  
South Pas Active Streets  
Sustainable Claremont  
The Wildwoods Foundation  
Tri-Valley Air Quality Climate Alliance  
Union of Concerned Scientists

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