

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING
AB 2635 (Celeste Rodriguez)
As Amended May 18, 2026
Majority vote

SUMMARY

Requires, to the extent funding is available, each large and medium air district, as defined, to offer commercial vouchers for zero-emission small off-road equipment (SORE). Prohibits districts from collecting or disclosing specified information from applicants. Prohibits, until January 31, 2032, a local government from adopting or enforcing an ordinance prohibiting the use of SORE unless the local government offers SORE vouchers to landscapers. Limits penalties for violations of local ordinances, as specified.

Major Provisions

- 1) Requires, to the extent funding is available, 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) Not inquire into or collect information about an individual's immigration or citizenship status or place of birth.
 - e) 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.
 - f) Unless the district is using funds appropriated specifically for purposes of implementing this bill, requires the district to ensure that any existing district incentive funds used to implement this bill achieve emissions reductions that are cost effective relative to other allowable uses of those funds.
 - 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, until January 31, 2032, a local government from adopting or enforcing an ordinance that prohibits the use of SORE landscaping equipment unless the district in which the local government is located offers commercial vouchers or the local government implements an incentive voucher program.
- 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.

COMMENTS

SORE emissions have been regulated since 1990, when exhaust and evaporative emission standards for SORE were first adopted by the Air Resources Board (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.

According to the Author

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.

Arguments in Support

According to sponsors Inclusive Action for the City, California Immigrant Policy Center, and National Day Laborer Organizing Network, many of the state's landscapers face significant challenges in obtaining electric equipment. Without an equitable transition, these policies risk placing disproportionate burdens on the very workers who are essential to our communities and to achieving the state's climate goals. In our conversations engaging directly with landscapers, we have learned that the overwhelming majority of those in the industry support the transition to electric equipment—but current policies make that transition inaccessible and nearly impossible. AB 2635 ensures that California's transition to zero-emission landscaping equipment is equitable, economically inclusive, and continues to align with the state's environmental goals while maintaining realities that have been identified by workers in the industry. Unfortunately California's transition to climate friendly equipment—while necessary—has created new economic and regulatory burdens that risk slowing, rather than accelerating, the transition.

Arguments in Opposition

According to the California Air Pollution Control Officers Association, not all air districts have the resources to implement and maintain a commercial rebate program. This unfunded state mandate will require air districts already struggling with limited resources to divert them from other areas that are resulting in greater public health benefits than those that may be realized with this bill.

According to a coalition of clean air advocates, AB 2635...would pre-empt local governments from taking sensible steps to protect their residents from excessive pollution from lawnmowers and leaf blowers...Cities and counties traditionally have the authority to protect the health and safety of their residents. The State should not take away the ability of local governments to accelerate the transition to zero-emission landscaping within their jurisdictions.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

- 1) By requiring local air districts to implement and maintain commercial voucher programs, to the extent funding is available, to support the transition to zero-emission SORE and requiring districts and local governments that adopt such programs to comply with specified requirements (such as providing language assistance when requested) in administering those programs, this bill imposes a state-mandated local program. These local costs are potentially reimbursable by the state, subject to a determination by the Commission on State Mandates. The magnitude of these costs is unknown but could be in the hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars annually (General Fund).

At least 16 of the 35 air districts in California offer SORE rebates for commercial equipment, which together comprise at least 70% of the state's population. While most districts require a minimum 15% cost-share for commercial applicants, districts may waive this requirement for public agencies and small businesses. Most districts follow guidelines for the Carl Moyer Program to administer SORE rebate programs, including the imposition of hard caps on incentive amounts depending on the type of equipment being purchased. For example, Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District imposes a \$50,000 cap per applicant per funding cycle, whereas Butte County Air Quality Management District imposes a \$25,000 cap.

Existing programs would likely require updates to meet the requirements of this bill. By adding administrative complexity and costs, this bill may reduce the number of SORE equipment deployed via rebates or vouchers. Current district programs are very popular and oversubscribed. If districts are forced to turn to existing funding sources (such as the Carl Moyer Program or the AB 617 Community Air Protection Program), this bill requires the districts to ensure those existing incentive funds used to implement this bill achieve emissions reductions that are cost-effective relative to other allowable uses of those funds (such as incentives for heavy-duty trucks and buses, school and transit buses, drayage trucks, emergency vehicles, charging stations, and other project categories).

- 2) ARB may incur some near-term costs as a result of this bill. For its part, ARB argues that because most air district lawn and garden equipment incentives are funded with monies from the Carl Moyer Program (which is implemented as a partnership between ARB and air districts), ARB must update the program guidelines to reflect the criteria and conditions outlined in the bill, thereby incurring costs of an unknown amount (Air Pollution Control Fund).

In 2021, the Legislature allocated \$30 million to provide incentives to sole proprietors and other small landscaping businesses to help them purchase SORE. ARB established an incentive program for small businesses and sole proprietor professional landscapers through the Clean Off-Road Equipment Voucher Incentive Project – with 1,906 items from 23 manufacturers in a dozen equipment categories available for point-of-sale vouchers. This funding is almost fully exhausted.

The author has submitted a budget request for fiscal year 2026-7 for \$30 million in one-time funding for ARB to provide incentives to help small landscaping companies and sole proprietorships transition to zero-emission land and gardening equipment, including leaf blowers and lawn mowers.

VOTES

ASM NATURAL RESOURCES: 11-2-1

YES: Bryan, Alanis, Connolly, Garcia, Haney, Hoover, Kalra, Pellerin, Schultz, Wicks, Zbur

NO: Ellis, Macedo

ABS, ABST OR NV: Muratsuchi

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 12-2-1

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

NO: Dixon, Tangipa

ABS, ABST OR NV: Ta

UPDATED

VERSION: May 18, 2026

CONSULTANT: Lawrence Lingbloom / NAT. RES. / (916) 319-2092

FN: 0002857