

---

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY**

**Senator Blakespear, Chair**

**2025 - 2026 Regular**

---

**Bill No:** AB 2635  
**Author:** Celeste Rodriguez  
**Version:** 5/18/2026  
**Urgency:** No  
**Consultant:** Heather Walters

**Hearing Date:** 6/24/2026  
**Fiscal:** Yes

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

**DIGEST:** This bill requires large and medium air districts, as defined, to offer commercial vouchers for zero-emission small off-road equipment (SORE), as specified. Prohibits air 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.

**ANALYSIS:**

Existing federal law:

- 1) Sets, through the Federal Clean Air Act (FCAA) and its implementing regulations, National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for six criteria pollutants, designates air basins that do not achieve NAAQS as nonattainment, allows only California to set emissions standards stricter than the federal government, and allows other states to adopt either the federal or California emissions standards. (42 U.S.C. §7401 et seq.)
- 2) Prohibits states from adopting emission standards that would affect new nonroad engines which are used in farm or construction equipment or vehicles and which are smaller than 175 horsepower. (42 U.S.C. §7543)
- 3) Dictates the conditions and requirements for the payment, receipt, and reporting (on tax form 1099) of incomes greater than \$2,000 in a year, including the name and address of the recipient (26 U.S.C. §6041 et seq.)

Existing state law:

- 1) Establishes the Air Resources Board (CARB) as the air pollution control agency in California and requires the CARB, among other things, to control

emissions from a wide array of mobile sources and implement the FCAA.  
(Health and Safety Code (HSC) §39500 et seq.)

- 2) Describes what is meant by “Small off-road engine” (SORE) by:
  - a) Defining SORE to mean 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;
  - b) Stating that SORE uses include, but are not limited to, applications such as lawn mowers, weed trimmers, chain saws, golf carts, specialty vehicles, generators, and pumps; and
- 3) Stating that all engines and equipment that fall within the scope of the preemption of Section 209(e)(1)(A) of the FCAA, as amended, and as defined by regulation of the Environmental Protection Agency, are specifically not included within this category. (13 CCR §2401)
- 4) Requires, pursuant to AB 1346 (Berman, Chapter 753, Statutes of 2021), CARB to:
  - a) Develop cost-effective and technologically feasible regulations to prohibit engine exhaust and evaporative emissions from new SORE, effective on or after January 1, 2024.
  - b) 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 (ZE) SORE operations.

This bill:

- 1) Requires medium and large air districts to, no later than January 1, 2028 and to the extent that funding is available, implement and maintain a commercial voucher program to support transitioning to ZE SORE. Further requires air districts:
  - a) Recognize and accept alternative forms of documentation instead of a business license to verify eligibility;
  - b) Not require a minimum length of time for a business to hold a license;

- c) Establish low-burden procedures to review and verify any required documentation in a manner that is equitable for landscapers;
  - d) Provide language assistance when requested;
  - 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 about an individual's criminal history or other forms of background check;
  - g) Ensure that any existing district incentive funds for SORE vouchers be cost effective compared to other allowable uses of those funds;
  - h) Not provide—except where otherwise required by state or federal law—voluntary consent to access the records of program participants that include personally identifiable information;
  - i) Not disclose nor provide in writing, verbally, or in any other manner, any personally identifiable information of any voucher participant;
- 2) Applies some or all of the above requirements to any small rural air district, local government, or nonpublic program administrators.
  - 3) Dictates that local governments:
    - a) Cannot, between January 1, 2027 and January 31, 2032, adopt or enforce an ordinance that prohibits the use of SORE landscaping equipment unless either the air district containing the local government or the local government itself offers a voucher incentive program;
    - b) Cannot punish any violation of a local government ordinance as an infraction or misdemeanor, nor by arrest. Instead provides a system of a warning, \$100 or less administrative fine, and \$200 or less administrative as acceptable punishments for violations;
    - c) Must take into consideration a person's ability to pay and provide certain notices regarding services;
    - d) Cannot impose more than 20% of penalty amounts to anyone receiving public benefits or whose monthly income is 200% or less of the current poverty guidelines;
    - e) Must offer community service in lieu of paying the administrative fine, or provide other alternatives as specified.

## Background

- 1) *Carl Moyer Program*. The Moyer Program provides grants to private companies and public agencies to clean up polluting engines beyond what is required by law through retrofitting, repowering or replacing their engines with newer and cleaner ones. These grants are issued locally by air districts. Moyer's primary objective is to obtain cost-effective and surplus emission

reductions to be credited toward California's obligations in the State Implementation Plan (SIP) – California's road map for attaining health-based national ambient air quality standards. Covered pollutants include oxides of nitrogen (NOx), reactive organic gases (ROG), and particulate matter (PM). Moyer is implemented as a partnership between CARB and California's 35 air districts working collaboratively with stakeholders to set guidelines and ensure the program reduces pollution and provides cleaner air for Californians.

The Moyer Program is funded through a variety of fees that go into the Air Pollution Control Fund (APCF). Specifically, vehicle registration surcharges adopted by local air districts in non-attainment areas, a \$0.75 fee on new tires, and a \$2 surcharge for local air districts on vehicle registrations are the primary sources of funding for the program.

- 2) *SORE emissions in California.* SORE emissions have been regulated since 1990, when exhaust and evaporative emission standards for SORE were first adopted by CARB. Following passage of AB 1346 (Berman), Chapter 753, Statutes of 2021, CARB adopted zero emission standards for SORE. It is important to note that CARB'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 CARB to identify funding for commercial rebates, which led to \$30 million in grants (funded by revenues in the Greenhouse Gas Reduction fund) being offered. 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, 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.

## Comments

- 1) *Purpose of Bill.* 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. It requires air districts to provide voucher programs for 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 workers face as they are asked to transition to costly alternatives within a short timeframe."
- 2) *Patchwork of policies.* The issues raised by AB 2635 highlight an unfortunate consequence of how several different policies at different levels of California government have interacted in unanticipated and undesirable ways.
  - a) *State-level policies.* When the Legislature passed AB 1346 in 2021 and CARB subsequently adopted their SORE regulations, neither policy directly targeted landscapers. Californians through 2024 and beyond can continue to operate their current CARB-compliant gasoline-powered SORE equipment; there is no state-level "ban" on using older models or used equipment purchased in the future. Older models on store shelves can also

be purchased even if they are gasoline-powered. Rather, by imposing technology-forcing regulations to move the industry towards necessarily buying ZE lawncare equipment from 2024 onward, AB 1346 and CARB's regulations attempted to change behavior by shifting the market.

Furthermore, 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. On July 29, 2025, funding for the CORE project was closed, and none has been available since.

All of these state-level approaches attempted to either shift the market of equipment available in California or provide incentives to help Californians make the switch. They did not penalize the use of gas-powered equipment.

- b) *Air district-level policies.* California is split into 35 distinct air districts, which range significantly in terms of geographic area, population, and air district resources. As a result, there is tremendous heterogeneity in terms of what regulations and incentives might apply. According to CARB's website, of the 35 air districts, some offer only commercial rebates, some offer only residential rebates, some offer both, and some offer neither.<sup>1</sup> As air districts' regulatory authority is largely constrained to stationary sources of air pollution, administering incentive programs is the primary way air districts support the accelerated adoption of clean offroad equipment. In other words, they generally do not penalize the use of gas-powered equipment.<sup>2</sup>
- c) *Local-level policies.* Many California cities have taken myriad approaches to addressing the use of gas-powered leaf blowers and other lawncare equipment, both for noise-related and pollution-motivated reasons. As a few examples, as of 2024, Los Angeles bans their use within 500 feet of residences. Davis limits use to a maximum of 10 minutes at a time. Newport and San Diego regulate the noise level, banning the use of blowers that are louder than vacuum cleaners at a distance of 20 paces.

---

<sup>1</sup> Zero-Emission Landscaping Equipment Incentive Programs. <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/our-work/programs/zero-emission-landscaping-equipment/zero-emission-landscaping-equipment-incentive>

<sup>2</sup> Regulatory Authority of the Sacramento Metropolitan AQMD Over Leaf Blowers. May 2017. <https://www.airquality.org/StationarySources/Documents/Regulatory%20authority%20over%20leaf%20blowers%20final.pdf>

Burlingame limits their use in different areas of the city to specific days.<sup>3</sup>

This wide range of policies reflects the wide range of political and practical considerations that are at play in the wide range of California cities and counties. By applying very specific constraints on local governments' abilities to enforce their own ordinances, AB 2635 uses state-level policy to limit local-level authorities. These interactions are the purview of the Senate Local Government Committee, where this bill will next be heard if passed by this committee today.

- d) *Putting it all together.* In summary, California has, through legislation and regulation, created a market where all new lawncare equipment must be ZE (which is still more expensive than traditional combustion-powered options). The state budget provided \$30 million in grants five years ago to ease this transition (which has long since been exhausted). Some air districts provide incentives funded by other sources for commercial and/or residential ZE lawncare equipment (although they are resource limited and cannot generally regulate the use of lawncare equipment). Many local governments have enacted a variety of different policies all aimed at achieving similar a similar outcome: reduced use of of gas-powered lawncare equipment in cities (which is typically effectuated through enforcing local ordinances).

The result of this for lawncare businesses (particularly sole proprietor or small businesses) is a complex thicket of differing requirements, an inability to buy new gas-powered equipment, and an unclear suite of incentives available from varying sources in varying amounts. It is little wonder affected lawncare professionals have sought a legislative remedy, given how no single part of the patchwork of policies is individually responsible for the present situation.

- 3) *Dictates or directions?* As written, AB 2635 would enshrine in state law a number of specific requirements that apply to a variety of programs administered by air districts and local governments. At least for the air districts, much of the funding currently eligible to go to ZE SORE incentives comes from the Moyer Program. The Moyer Program is ultimately shaped by CARB through Guidelines. The Moyer Program Guidelines—including as they pertain to funds used for ZE lawn and garden equipment—were updated as recently as

---

<sup>3</sup> Leaf Blower Regulation. Sustainable San Mateo County – Sustainability Ideas Bank.  
[https://sustainablesanmateo.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Leaf-Blower-Regulation\\_202401.pdf](https://sustainablesanmateo.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Leaf-Blower-Regulation_202401.pdf)

last week.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the recent Moyer Program Guideline updates directly address one of the core issues raised by this bill. CARB described the updates to the Lawn and Garden Equipment Guidelines as, “Broadens eligibility by allowing districts to determine acceptable verification documents for commercial lawn and garden businesses, addressing concerns that strict business license requirements may exclude informal landscaping companies.” This specific section may obviate the need for part of this bill, and it may also provide a model for how other policies in the bill (specifically those that would affect programs that are funded by Moyer Program) could be implemented.

It is worth considering whether, rather than statutorily dictate how air districts may or may not administer their ZE SORE incentive programs, requiring CARB to update the Moyer Program Guidelines to direct air districts to implement said requirements as permissible under state and federal law could be an effective way to carry out the goals of this bill.

- 4) *Taking policy tools off the table for landscaping tools.* In addition to placing requirements on air districts, AB 2635 also imposes specific constraints on local governments: a prohibition on adopting or enforcing any ordinance that prohibits the use of SORE landscaping equipment unless a commercial voucher program is in place, and specific limitations on how local governments can punish violations of any ordinance governing the use of SORE landscaping equipment. While the latter is more the purview of the Senate Local Government Committee (where this bill will go next if passed today), the former risks imposing limitations on local governments’ ability to control significant sources of air pollution and GHGs in their communities.

Under the bill as written, if for any reason a district didn’t offer a commercial voucher program (either due to capacity limitations, funding constraints, or policy prioritization), all local governments in the region would be strictly prohibited from governing SORE landscaping equipment use in any way. Given the significant contribution such SOREs make to local air pollution, the risk of limiting local governments’ powers to regulate sources within their purview due to circumstances outside of their control may be problematic.

***The committee may wish to consider striking the conditional prohibition on local governments’ ability to adopt and enforce ordinances governing the use of SORE landscaping equipment.***

---

<sup>4</sup> Carl Moyer Program Guidelines. Chapter 9: Lawn and Garden Equipment Replacement. CARB June 12, 2026 [https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2026-06/Chapter\\_9\\_Lawn%26Garden\\_Equipment\\_Replacement\\_.pdf](https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2026-06/Chapter_9_Lawn%26Garden_Equipment_Replacement_.pdf)

- 5) *Zero emissions, zero additional resources, zero sum incentives.* The incentive programs administered by air districts are perennially oversubscribed. Without additional resources—such as those provided in the 2021-2022 Budget—funding ZE SORE incentives necessarily comes at the expense of defunding something else. Although AB 2635 directs air districts to ensure that any use of existing air district funds for ZE SORE incentives is cost effective relative to other allowable uses, this may be easier said than done and could be subject to disagreement and ambiguity. Although the author of this measure is also seeking money in this year’s Budget to fund ZE SORE vouchers once more, this money has yet to materialize, and so landscapers and air districts alike are put in a challenging predicament.

***Rather than infringing on air district and local government authorities by adding further specific constraints onto funds that are already inadequate, the committee may wish to make the requirements on air districts to operate SORE voucher programs contingent on the receipt of additional funds for that purpose.***

- 6) *Committee amendments. Staff recommends the committee adopt the bolded amendments contained in comments 4 and 5 above.*

### **DOUBLE REFERRAL:**

If this measure is approved by the Senate Environmental Quality Committee, the do pass motion must include the action to re-refer the bill to the Senate Local Government Committee.

### **Related/Prior Legislation**

AB 1346 (Berman, Chapter 753, Statutes of 2021), required CARB to develop cost-effective and technologically feasible regulations to prohibit engine exhaust and evaporative emissions from new SORE, effective on or after January 1, 2024; and 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 ZE SORE operations.

**SOURCE:** California Immigrant Policy Center  
Inclusive Action

**SUPPORT:**

Alliance for a Better Community  
Alliance San Diego  
Altcap California  
Asociacion De Emprendedor@s  
Border Angels  
Buen Vecino  
California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA) Action  
California Immigrant Policy Center  
Cameo Network  
Central American Resource Center of California (CARECEN-LA)  
Central Valley Immigrant Integration Collaborative  
Centro Community Hispanic Association (centro Cha Inc.)  
Centro Laboral De Graton  
Cielo  
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights  
First Community Capital, INC.  
Five Rivers Loan Fund, INC.  
Immigrants Rising  
Inclusive Action  
Inclusive Action for the City  
Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice  
Innercity Struggle  
Kiwa  
LA Forward Institute  
Latino Coalition for a Healthy California  
Lift  
Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE)  
Los Angeles Economic Equity & Access Forward  
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  
Our Future Los Angeles  
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  
T.r.u.s.t. South LA  
Thai Community Development Center  
The Los Angeles Tool Library  
The Translatin@ Coalition  
Urban Visionaries  
Vera California  
Worksafe

**OPPOSITION:**

California Air Pollution Control Officers Association  
Quiet Clean Alliance  
350 Humboldt  
7th Generation Advisors  
Ban Gas Leaf Blowers San Jose  
Bay Area Air Quality Management District  
Coalition for Clean Air  
Tri-valley Air Quality Climate Alliance  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
1 Individual

**-- END --**