

Date of Hearing: August 30, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

Liz Ortega, Chair

AB 605 (Muratsuchi) – As Amended August 21, 2026

SUBJECT: Employment: refineries: task force

SUMMARY: Establishes in the state government the Refinery Safe Staffing Task Force (task force) consisting of employee representatives, employer representatives, representatives from organizations committed to worker and community safety, and public members. Requires the task force, by June 1, 2029, to present to the Legislature, and make available online to the public, a report with a wide range of potential methods and strategies for ensuring maximum employee retention prior to refinery closures. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Makes findings and declarations regarding staffing shortages caused by the announcement of refinery closures.
- 2) Establishes in the state government the task force consisting of the following members:
 - a) Three representatives of unions representing proprietary employees at refineries, as defined, one each appointed by the Governor or their appointed Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) Process Safety Management (PSM) Unit regional manager, the Speaker of the Assembly, and the Senate Committee on Rules, respectively.
 - b) Three representatives of unions representing building trades whose members serve as contractors at refineries, one each appointed by the Governor or their appointed DIR PSM Unit regional manager, the Speaker of the Assembly, and the Senate Committee on Rules, respectively.
 - c) Three representatives of refinery employers appointed by the Governor or their appointed DIR PSM Unit regional manager.
 - d) Three representatives of nongovernmental organizations whose mission relates to the well-being of workers and refinery communities, one each appointed by the Governor, the Speaker of the Assembly, and the Senate Committee on Rules, respectively.
 - e) Two members of the public with expertise in refinery process safety, to be appointed by the Governor or their appointed DIR PSM Unit regional manager.
- 3) Requires all members to be appointed and begin serving on the task force no later than January 1, 2028.
- 4) Requires the task force to do all of the following:
 - a) Select one of its members to be its chair.
 - b) Have all of its responsibilities, powers, and duties set forth herein.

- c) Consult with, and may utilize, the staff of the DIR PSM Unit.
- 5) States that the purpose of the task force is to develop potential methods and strategies for ensuring maximum employee retention at refineries, during, and especially in the time period preceding, a refinery closure or long-term idling of a refinery, and for addressing employment dislocations associated with oil, gas, and related industries.
- 6) Requires, no later than June 1, 2029, the task force to present to the Legislature, and make available online to the public, a report documenting a wide range of potential methods and strategies for ensuring maximum employee retention in the time period preceding refinery closure or long-term idling of a refinery, including, without limitation, any of the following:
 - a) Extended severance periods.
 - b) Paid job training.
 - c) Extended job placement assistance.
 - d) Priority transfer to other refineries.
 - e) Financial and logistical assistance.
- 7) Provides that the recommendations of the task force may be considered in collective bargaining but are not binding.
- 8) States that the above provisions become inoperative on July 1, 2029, and, as of January 1, 2030, are repealed.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA) within the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) to, among other things, propose, administer, and enforce occupational safety and health standards. Labor Code §6300 et seq.
- 2) Establishes the Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board (Standards Board), within DIR, to promote, adopt, and maintain reasonable and enforceable standards that will ensure a safe and healthful workplace for workers. Labor Code §140-147.6.
- 3) Requires Cal/OSHA to issue a citation to an employer that it believes, upon inspection or investigation, has violated specified workplace health and safety laws or any standard, rule or order pursuant to them. Each citation must be in writing and must describe the nature of the violation, including a reference to the provision of the code, standard, rule, regulation, or order alleged to have been violated. The citation must also include a reasonable time for the abatement of the alleged violation. The period specified for abatement shall not commence running until the date the citation or notice is received or the date the return is made to the post office. Labor Code § 6317.
- 4) Directs the Standards Board and Cal/OSHA, in accordance with the California Refinery and Health Standards Board Act of 1990, to promote worker safety through implementation of

training and process safety management (PSM) practices in refineries and chemical plants and other facilities deemed appropriate. Labor Code §7852(a).

- 5) Defines “refinery” as an establishment that produces gasoline, diesel fuel, aviation fuel, or biofuel through the processing of crude oil or alternative feedstock. Labor Code §7853(c).
- 6) Defines “process safety management” as the application of management programs, which are not limited to engineering guidelines, when dealing with the risks associated with handling or working near hazardous chemicals. PSM is intended to prevent or minimize the consequences of catastrophic releases of acutely hazardous, flammable, or explosive chemicals. Labor Code §7853(b).
- 7) Directs the Standards Board to adopt, by March 31, 2014, process safety management standards for refineries, chemical plants, and other manufacturing facilities, as specified. Labor Code §7856(a).
- 8) Directs Cal/OSHA to propose, and the Standards Board to consider for adoption, regulations to implement PSM standards for refineries by January 1, 2026. (Labor Code §7856(b).
- 9) Establishes the California Accidental Release Prevention program (CalARP) with the goal of reducing regulated hazardous substances accident risks and eliminating duplication of regulatory programs. CalARP implements the federal risk management program, as provided in the federal Clean Air Act and as promulgated by the Federal Environmental Protection Agency, in the state, with certain amendments that are specific to the state. Health & Safety Code §25531 et seq.

FISCAL EFFECT: According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, “DIR would potentially incur costs in the hundreds of thousands of dollars annually to convene the Task Force.”

COMMENTS: According to the Public Policy Institute of California, the state had about 100,000 workers in the fossil fuel industry in 2025. Refineries, however, have been closing across the country and California has experienced a number of closures in just the last five years. First, “the Marathon refinery in Contra Costa County [closed] in 2020, which put hundreds of people out of work before the plant converted to renewable fuels with a fraction of the former workforce. Then Phillips 66 began shifting one of its Contra Costa County refineries to renewables and closed an affiliated plant on the Central Coast.¹” Just last April, workers at the Marathon facility went on strike over safety concerns and understaffing and are currently locked out of work.

In the 2022 Budget Act, California allocated \$30 million to help displaced oil and gas workers gain reemployment through a pilot program. Targeted regions for the assistance have been Kern County, Contra Costa County, and Los Angeles County. To date, approximately 518 individuals have been served with the goal of helping over 1,700 individuals’ total. Overall, about 27.7 million dollars has been awarded and of that, 4.8 million dollars has been spent by the awardees.

¹ CalMatters, “Oil refinery closures leave workers searching for a job that ‘just doesn’t exist.” October 8, 2025.

According to the author, “When California refineries begin procedures to close or enter long-term idling, employees are often laid off or leave to seek new opportunities. While understandable, these staffing shortages result in health and safety risks to both refinery employees and the surrounding communities.

AB 605 addresses this issue by establishing a 14-member Refinery Safe Staffing Task Force to develop and publish potential methods and strategies for ensuring maximum employee retention at refineries and addressing employment dislocations associated with oil, gas, and related industries.

AB 605 takes a proactive approach to protecting worker and community safety by establishing a task force to promote safe staffing and ensure employees are safely operating and maintaining highly hazardous processes.”

Arguments in Support

California Labor for Climate Jobs and United Steelworkers Local 675 are in support and state, “Refineries handle volatile and highly hazardous substances where mistakes can have catastrophic consequences. California's refinery safety framework – including the Process Safety Management standard and the California Accidental Release Prevention Program – recognizes that organizational changes can affect safety. However, existing regulations do not explicitly address the unique risks created during refinery closure or long-term idling, nor do they require employers to proactively plan for the staffing challenges that accompany these transitions...

Importantly, AB 605 creates a balanced Refinery Safe Staffing Task Force that brings together labor representatives, refinery employers, process safety experts, and community organizations to develop evidence-based standards and best practices. This collaborative approach will ensure that future requirements are informed by those with direct experience operating refineries safely and those most affected by refinery incidents.”

Arguments in Opposition

A coalition of business groups, including the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, are opposed and state, “The bill inserts a new government task force into matters that are already addressed through collective bargaining, employer workforce planning, and established workforce development programs. This duplicative approach risks creating conflicting requirements and further complicating workforce decisions at a time when refinery operators are already facing unprecedented economic and regulatory pressure.”

Related Legislation

SB 966 (Gonzalez) of 2026 would require an employer, in consultation with employees and employee representatives, to develop, implement, and maintain a written plan to effectively provide for employee participation in all process safety management elements. The bill would also require, on or before April 1, 2027, an employer, in consultation with employee and employee representatives, to develop and implement stop work procedures and procedures for reporting and responding to hazards, as specified. The bill is on the Assembly Floor.

AB 1259 (Blaskespear) of 2026 would require, no later than December 31, 2028, every refiner, as defined, to submit to CalEPA a retirement plan setting forth information concerning decommissioning and site remediation for every refinery it owns, operates, or controls, as provided. The bill would require the CalEPA, no later than 6 months following the submission of the retirement plan, to review the retirement plan for completeness and reasonableness and to make a determination as to whether the retirement plan complies with the requirements imposed by the bill. This bill is on the Assembly Floor.

AB 2157 (Connolly) of 2026 would eliminate the July 1, 2027, sunset on the Displaced Oil and Gas Worker Pilot Program (program) established to address employment dislocations associated with oil, gas, and related industries. This bill is on the Senate Floor.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**Support**

United Steelworkers District 12 (Sponsor)
California Labor for Climate Jobs
The Climate Center
United Steelworkers Local 675

Opposition

California Manufacturers & Technology Association
Coastal Energy Alliance
Colab Ventura County
Garden Grove Chamber of Commerce
Greater Conejo Valley Chamber of Commerce
Harbor Association of Industry and Commerce
Industrial Environmental Association
Inland Empire Economic Partnership
Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
Los Angeles County Business Federation
Moorpark Chamber of Commerce
Redondo Beach Chamber of Commerce
Sage
Santa Barbara County Taxpayer Advocacy Center
South Bay Association of Chambers of Commerce
Tri County Chamber Alliance
Vica
Western States Petroleum Association
Wilmington Chamber of Commerce

Other

Air Products and Chemicals, INC.

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