

GOVERNOR'S VETO
AB 605 (Muratsuchi)
As Enrolled September 4, 2026
2/3 vote

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.

Senate Amendments

- 1) Delete the prior version of the bill.
- 2) Establish 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) Require all members to be appointed and begin serving on the task force no later than January 1, 2028.
- 4) Require 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) State 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) Require, 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) Provide that the recommendations of the task force may be considered in collective bargaining but are not binding.
- 8) State that the above provisions become inoperative on July 1, 2029, and, as of January 1, 2030, are repealed.

Governor's Veto Message

"I am returning Assembly Bill 605 without my signature.

This bill would establish the Refinery Safe Staffing Task Force, composed of employer and employee organization representatives, to report to the Legislature by June 1, 2029, on strategies for employee retention prior to refinery closures.

I support the author's intent to identify strategies to protect and support workers displaced by refinery closures, and the state needs a real, long-term plan. This bill, however, establishes a task force supported by staff from the Division of Occupational Safety and Health's Process Safety Management Unit, which primarily inspects refineries and chemical plants that handle large quantities of toxic and flammable materials. This Unit is also charged with enforcing health and safety standards intended to prevent catastrophic explosions, fires, and releases of dangerous chemicals.

I am concerned that diverting these specialized inspectors to support the task force envisioned by this bill—without any identified resources—will diminish their ability to focus on holding refineries accountable for meeting required health and safety standards, potentially putting refinery workers at greater risk.

For these reasons, I cannot sign this bill."

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.

According to the Author

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."

¹ CalMatters, "Oil refinery closures leave workers searching for a job that 'just doesn't exist." October 8, 2025.

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."

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, "DIR would potentially incur costs in the hundreds of thousands of dollars annually to convene the Task Force."

VOTES

ASM TRANSPORTATION: 15-0-1

YES: Wilson, Davies, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Carrillo, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Jackson, Lackey, Lowenthal, Macedo, Ransom, Rogers, Ward

ABS, ABST OR NV: Papan

ASM NATURAL RESOURCES: 14-0-0

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

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 14-0-1

YES: Wicks, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Elhawary, Fong, Mark González, Hart, Pacheco, Pellerin, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

ABS, ABST OR NV: Sanchez

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 78-0-1

YES: 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, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

ABS, ABST OR NV: Celeste Rodriguez

SENATE FLOOR: 29-11-0

YES: Allen, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Cortese, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Padilla, Pérez, Reyes, Richardson, Rubio, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Umberg, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

NO: Alvarado-Gil, Choi, Dahle, Grove, Hurtado, Jones, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Seyarto, Strickland, Valladares

ASM LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT: 4-2-1

YES: Ortega, Kalra, Lee, Ward

NO: Alanis, Chen

ABS, ABST OR NV: Elhawary

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 51-18-10

YES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Connolly, Elhawary, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Garcia, Gipson, Mark González, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Lee, Lowenthal, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Ortega, Patel, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Rogers, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Stefani, Valencia, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NO: Alanis, Castillo, Chen, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Ellis, Jeff Gonzalez, Hadwick, Hoover, Johnson, Lackey, Macedo, Patterson, Sanchez, Ta, Tangipa, Wallis

ABS, ABST OR NV: Carrillo, Krell, Nguyen, Pacheco, Papan, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Michelle Rodriguez, Blanca Rubio, Soria

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