
SENATE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Senator María Elena Durazo, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: AB 652
Author: Alvarez
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Fiscal: No
Consultant: Vargas

SAN DIEGO COUNTY AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT: GOVERNING BOARD: ALTERNATE MEMBERS

Authorizes the designation of alternate board members and staggers terms starting in 2029 for specific members in San Diego County Air Pollution Control District.

Background

California Air Resources Board. California's efforts to protect the public from the harmful effects of air pollution and help prepare the state for the effects of climate change involves federal, state, and local governments. The California Air Resources Board (CARB) works with the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and spearheads the state's non-vehicular air pollution efforts through 35 air pollution control districts and air quality management districts (air districts). CARB is comprised of 16 members, including 12 members the Governor appoints and the Senate confirms. Five of these members serve on local air districts, four are experts in fields that shape air quality rules, two are members of the public, and one serves as the CARB chair. The remaining four members include two members who represent environmental justice communities (one each appointed by the Senate and the Assembly) and two non-voting members for Legislative oversight (also one each appointed by the Senate and the Assembly). AB 197 (Eduardo Garcia, 2016) established staggered six-year terms for CARB's voting members.

Local air districts. CARB oversees the state's 35 air districts, who adopt and enforce rules and regulations to achieve and maintain state and federal air quality standards affected by businesses and facilities, ranging from oil refineries to auto body shops to dry cleaners. State law spells out the membership of these local air districts' governing boards, but there are many variations. Some are county-specific, while others are regional entities with representation from more than one county, and some have their own specific governing statutes. While governance structures vary, each district appoints an air pollution control officer, whose responsibilities include enforcing all orders, regulations, and rules the district board prescribes.

Air districts generally receive funding from grants, subventions, permit fees, penalties, and/or a surcharge or fee on motor vehicles registered in the district. If these funding sources do not provide the district with sufficient revenues to meet its expenses, an air district can levy an annual per capita assessment on those cities that have agreed to have a member on the district board and on the county or counties included within the district. Any annual per capita assessment imposed on the cities and/or counties included in a district must be imposed on an equitable per capita basis.

Most county air districts must have both mayors or city council members and county supervisors to reflect the geographic diversity of the county. Cities and the county meet and determine the

appropriation composition, which a majority of county supervisors and a majority of the cities representing a majority of the county's population must approve. A city selection committee selects the city council members for the board, and the board of supervisors selects its representatives. They also select the alternates for each board member. Of the 22 single-county districts, 11 have boards with city representation and 11 have boards with only county supervisors.

San Diego County Air Pollution Control District (SDAPCD). The San Diego County Air Pollution Control District (SDAPCD) represents over 3 million people across the 18 cities and unincorporated areas in San Diego County. SDAPCD issues permits to over 4,000 local businesses and public agencies, and conducts over 10,000 inspections each year. The districts largest revenue sources are intergovernmental revenues, including state and federal programs; licenses, permits, and franchises; and other financing sources.

In 2019, AB 423 (Gloria) restructured the SDAPCD board to an 11-member board consisting of:

- Two County supervisors, one of which must be the supervisor who is currently serving as the SDAPCD member for CARB;
- The mayor or a city council member at-large from the City of San Diego;
- One city council member or mayor from each of the five supervisorial districts; and
- Three public members, including a physician or public health professional, an environmental justice representative, and a person with a scientific or technical background in air pollution.

All members of the board serve four-year terms. The governing board also consults with the U.S. Armed Forces on how regulations affect their mission and must designate one member to serve as liaison to the U.S. Armed Forces.

SDAPCD had a difficult time members attending meetings, therefore delaying critical decisions from the board. The author wants to give the authority to SDAPCD to assign alternates and be able to stagger terms when select board members are appointed.

Proposed Law

Assembly Bill 652 repeals the requirement that one of the two supervisors serving on the SDCAPCD board be the supervisor also serving on CARB.

AB 652 selects city representatives from supervisorial districts 4 and 5 and two public members, the environmental justice representative and the person with a scientific background, to serve a two-year term starting calendar year 2029 or until a successor is appointed.

AB 652 authorizes the designation of alternate board members to all board members, provided the alternate meets the same qualifications as the regular member, and authorizes alternates to vote and receive per diem compensation and expenses if they attend.

AB 652 also clarifies that the board must consult with the U.S. Armed Forces when it appoints the liaison to the U.S. Armed Forces.

Comments

1. Purpose of the bill. According to the author, “AB 652, modernizes the governance of the San Diego Air Pollution Control District (SDAPCD), positioning it to effectively tackle contemporary environmental, equity, and operational challenges. This bill enhances the board’s capacity to protect public health and air quality by introducing alternate members to expedite decision-making, updating compensation to attract qualified experts, and mandating collaboration with military stakeholders to balance environmental and national security priorities. By ensuring that public members possess expertise in health impacts, environmental justice, and air pollution science, AB 652 amplifies the voices of vulnerable communities disproportionately affected by pollution. These changes are vital for an efficient, inclusive, and transparent board that responds to the unique needs of a region rich in military installations and confronted with poor air quality. AB 652 is not merely about achieving cleaner air; it is about guaranteeing that every San Diegan has a seat at the decision-making table. This bill enhances San Diego’s capacity to address air pollution in equitable and efficient manner-ultimately protecting vulnerable communities, supporting military collaborations, and furthering California’s leadership in climate action.”

2. Catching up. County air districts allow their city selection committee and city councils to appoint alternates to their representatives on the governing boards of county air pollution control districts (SB 113, Senate Local Government Committee, 2009). However, when SDAPCD got their own statutory code section, AB 423 did not include a similar provision to align with other single-county air district boards. AB 652 aims to correct this omission by allowing SDAPCD to appoint alternates, consistent with the authority granted to other single county air districts.

3. Transitions. Every four years, SDAPCD undergoes a full appointment process. This can result in replacing the entire board at once, which may cause inconsistencies in decision-making about air pollution in the region. To ease transitions, AB 652 proposes to stagger the terms of four out of its eleven members. To accomplish this, the bill shortens the terms of office for two specific city representatives and the environmental justice and scientific members appointed in the 2029 calendar year to two years, while the other seven members would serve four years. While staggering terms is common in local governments, it is unclear why those members should serve shorter terms than the others. Instead, the Committee may wish to amend the process so that the board clerk conducts a random draw at the first meeting of the 2029 calendar year, ensuring all eight members have an equal chance of serving shorter terms.

4. Incoming! The Senate Rules Committee has ordered a double referral of AB 652: first to the Committee on Environmental Quality, which approved AB 652 at its July 2nd hearing on a vote of 7-0, and the second to the Committee on Local Government.

Assembly Actions

Assembly Natural Resources Committee:
Assembly Floor:

13-1
63-2

Support and Opposition (7/11/25)

Support: County of San Diego Fourth District Supervisor Monica Montgomery Steppe
County of San Diego Third District Supervisor Terra Lawson-Remer
City of San Diego
Military Services in California
San Diego County Air Pollution Control District

Opposition: California Business Properties Association
Industrial Environmental Association
NAIOP San Diego
San Diego Working Waterfront

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