

CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

AB 706 (Aguiar-Curry)

As Amended August 21, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Authorizes, upon appropriation, the establishment of the Forest Organic Residue Energy and Safety Transformation (FOREST) program to maintain and expand biomass power generation in the state.

Senate Amendments

- 1) Require, upon appropriation by the Legislature, moneys from the Timber Regulation and Forest Restoration Fund (TRFR) or from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF), to be made available to the Board of Forestry (Board) to establish the FOREST program in order to maintain and expand biomass power generation in the state, to revitalize idle facilities for biomass power generation, and to support biomass power generation facilities by creating additional capacity for power generation or feedstock utilization in strategically located regions of the state.
- 2) Provide that a facility's electrical generation is eligible for reimbursement under the FOREST program at a determined incentive rate if it meets specified requirements.
- 3) Authorize an operator of a facility to seek reimbursement by submitting an application to the Board that demonstrates that the facility processes solid fuel biomass to generate electricity and by submitting supporting documentation that demonstrates the facility is certified by the California Energy Commission (CEC) as an eligible renewable energy resource for purposes of satisfying the renewable portfolio standard.
- 4) Require the Board to adopt regulations, as necessary, to implement the FOREST program.
- 5) Revise the findings and declarations.
- 6) Strike funding priority for the Bioenergy Renewable Auction Mechanism and Bioenergy Market Adjusting Tariff fleets.
- 7) Double-joint the bill with AB 2494 (Rogers) to avoid chaptering out amendments to Public Resources Code 4629.6 and 4629.8.

COMMENTS

California covers about 100 million acres and approximately 40% of the state is forest. Forest operations such as logging, thinning, fuels reduction programs, and ecosystem restoration create a huge amount of woody biomass. Some of this is brought out of the forest for use, but as much as half of the biomass is left in the forest. When residues from mastication and slash from timber harvests are left scattered throughout the forest, they act as additional dry surface fuel and serve to increase intensity and severity if a wildfire burns through the area. Often woody biomass materials are piled and burned creating air pollution, such as black carbon, or left to decay, creating methane.

According to the CEC, there are currently approximately 47 million bone dry tons (BDT) of biomass resource potential in California. According to the Board, state requirements to remove forest fuels on a combined one million acres per year will lead to 10 to 15 million BDT of forest waste biomass annually.

SB 901 (Dodd), Chapter 626, Statutes of 2018, requires California to double forest fuel removal to reduce the risks of catastrophic wildfires. More recently, California entered an agreement with the USFS to reduce forest fuels on one million acres per year. While some of that will be accomplished with prescribed fire, much of it will require mechanical thinning that will generate millions of tons of forest waste per year.

AB 706 authorizes, upon appropriation, the establishment of the FOREST program to maintain and expand biomass power generation in the state.

According to the Author

California's forests, covering nearly one-third of the state, provide critical environmental, economic, and climate benefits but are increasingly threatened by wildfires, drought, and invasive species. To mitigate these risks, the state has committed to removing forest biomass waste from one million acres annually, generating millions of tons of waste each year. However, without sufficient infrastructure to process this material, much of it is either openly burned or left to decay. Both of these options produce harmful emissions, including methane, a potent greenhouse gas. AB 706 addresses this challenge by establishing the FOREST and Wildfire Prevention Fund, which will promote the sustainable utilization of biomass waste for bioenergy. This initiative will reduce wildfire risks, cut climate and air pollution, and enhance economic opportunities in some of California's most vulnerable regions—all without increasing costs for energy ratepayers.

Arguments in Support

A coalition of local water agencies, resource conservation districts, firefighters, and utilities, among others, write that California's wildfire crisis demands a more comprehensive strategy to reduce hazardous fuels, restore forest resilience, and support post-fire recovery across millions of acres of forested land. While the state has set ambitious goals for landscape-scale treatment, these efforts also create millions of tons of low-value forest biomass, including dead trees, damaged timber, and other debris left behind after severe wildfires. In many burned areas, this material must be removed to make reforestation, erosion control, road and infrastructure access, and other recovery activities possible, yet it often has little or no market value and can be costly to transport or dispose of. Without sufficient processing and utilization options, post-fire biomass is commonly piled, openly burned, left to decay, or abandoned on the landscape, which can delay restoration, increase future fuel loads, and release harmful emissions and short-lived climate pollutants. Expanding bioenergy capacity is therefore an important part of post-fire recovery because it creates a reliable outlet for otherwise low-value material, helps reduce the cost of cleanup and restoration work supports more timely replanting and watershed recovery, and converts excess biomass into clean, dependable energy.

Arguments in Opposition

A coalition of environmental organizations writes, "AB 706 will not save the state money on community wildfire protection costs. Home hardening and defensible space work immediately around homes is the most effective way to keep homes safe during wildfire—not thinning/logging forests. California studies show that vegetation removal beyond 100 feet from

homes provides no additional benefit for preventing them from burning. Forest thinning can even make fires burn hotter and faster by creating open, hotter, drier, more wind-prone conditions—increasing risks to communities."

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, this bill will result in:

- 1) Ongoing cost pressure of an unknown but potentially significant amount, possibly in the low millions to tens of millions of dollars annually, to provide funding for the FOREST and Wildfire Prevention Fund to support increased procurement, transport, and beneficial use of forest biomass waste (TRFRF or GGRF).
- 2) CAL FIRE estimates ongoing costs of approximately \$209,000 in the first year and \$372,000 annually thereafter (General Fund) for the Board to implement the provisions of this bill.

VOTES:

ASM NATURAL RESOURCES: 13-0-1

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

ABS, ABST OR NV: Muratsuchi

ASM UTILITIES AND ENERGY: 18-0-0

YES: Petrie-Norris, Patterson, Boerner, Calderon, Chen, Davies, Fong, Mark González, Harabedian, Hart, Irwin, Papan, Rogers, Schiavo, Solache, Ta, Wallis, Zbur

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 11-0-4

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

ABS, ABST OR NV: Sanchez, Dixon, Ta, Tangipa

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 75-0-4

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, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, 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, Rivas

ABS, ABST OR NV: Lee, Muratsuchi, Celeste Rodriguez, Zbur

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