

Date of Hearing: June 8, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Isaac G. Bryan, Chair

SB 1207 (Laird) – As Amended April 15, 2026

SENATE VOTE: 36-0

SUBJECT: California Conservation Corps

SUMMARY: Makes changes to California Conservation Corps' (CCC) statutes to clarify the scope of authorized projects and to specifically permit CCC to contract with corps established by California Native American tribes, and allows corpsmembers to purchase service credit toward their public-sector retirement.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Pursuant to the CCC governing statutes (Public Resources Code (PRC) 14000-14424):
 - a) Establishes the CCC in the Natural Resources Agency (NRA) and requires the CCC to implement and administer the conservation corps program.
 - b) Directs CCC program activities, including the management of environmentally important lands and water, public works projects, facilitating public use of resources, assistance in emergency operations, assistance in fire prevention and suppression, energy conservation, and environmental restoration.
 - c) Finds and declares it is in the best interest of the state that federal funds designated to be expended by federal agencies for this purpose be allocated, to the extent feasible, to the CCC and certified community conservation corps.
 - d) Authorizes the director to any services, materials, or property of any agency of the state and may make any agreements with any agency of the state, or take any other actions, that are reasonable and necessary.
 - e) Authorizes the CCC, until January 1, 2024, to enter into a contract with an individual or collective of certified community conservation corps for a specified type of project or program.
- 2) Establishes the Public Employees' Retirement Law and creates the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS), which provides defined benefits to its members based on their final compensation, credited service, and age at retirement, subject to certain variations. Authorizes a member of PERS to elect to receive service credit for certain public service outside the system, including time served as a volunteer in the Peace Corps or AmeriCorps, by making specified contributions to the system. (Government Code 20000 - 21716)
- 3) Regulates the wages, hours, and working conditions of employees with specified exceptions. Applies these provisions to and includes employees in any occupation, trade, or industry, except for any individual employed as an outside salesperson or any individual participating in a national service program carried out using assistance. (Labor Code 1171)

- 4) Requires the CCC to report by December 31 of each year the total number of corpsmembers in the cohort who permanently separated from the corps during the state fiscal year that ended 18 months before the date the report is due. (PRC 14424 9 (a))

THIS BILL:

- 1) Authorizes a CCC corpsmember to elect to receive service credit for service as a corpsmember or special corpsmember with the CCC under PERS.
- 2) Provides that corpsmembers and special corpsmembers can receive state retirement benefits.
- 3) Includes CCC participants in the Labor Code provision that excepts salesperson and participants in national service organizations from provisions regulating wages, hours, and working conditions.
- 4) Establishes the intent of the Legislature that the young adults who have successfully completed at least one year of service with the corps to be recognized for their dedication and development and that all state entities look for paths to include former corpsmembers into their organizations.
- 5) Adds the following types of projects that adults participating in the corps program can engage in:
 - a) Wildfire prevention and suppression, including forest resiliency; and,
 - b) Technical, administrative, culinary, and other services to individuals and entities engaged in work aligning with currently authorized projects.
- 6) Requires the projects listed in 5) to provide opportunities to California Native American tribes and corpsmembers.
- 7) Repeals PRC 14308 authorizing the director of the CCC to use any services, materials, or property of any agency of the state and may make any agreements with any agency of the state, or take any other actions, that are reasonable and necessary.
- 8) Authorizes the CCC to enter into a contract with a conservation corps established by California Native American tribes for a project or program.
- 9) Requires the CCC report due December 31 of each year to additionally include the number of corpsmembers who reported and disaggregated as the number enrolled at a California Community College, California State University, University of California, or private postsecondary educational institution. Deletes the requirement to report on the number of corpsmembers who received an associate or bachelor's degree.
- 10) Makes technical, nonsubstantive code cleanup.

FISCAL EFFECT: According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, pursuant to Senate Rule 28.8, this bill is determined to have negligible state costs.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **California Conservation Corps.** The CCC, established by Governor Jerry Brown during his first term in 1976, is the oldest and largest state conservation corps program in the country. It's modeled after the 1930s Civilian Conservation Corps. The CCC's motto is "Hard work, low pay, miserable conditions ... and more!" The CCC has provided more than 74 million hours of natural resource work, such as trail restoration, tree planting, habitat restoration, and more than 11.3 million hour of work on emergency response – fires, floods, and earthquakes — since 1976.

Although the CCC was originally conceived as a labor source for trail maintenance and restoration, it has since evolved to a workforce development program. Corpsmembers now learn skills such as, forestry management, energy auditing and installation, emergency services management, and firefighting. Many corpsmembers also receive their high school diplomas and industry certifications at the conclusion of their service. The CCC is designed as a one-year program, with the possibility of extension to up to three years pending performance of the member. More than 120,000 young people have participated in the CCC over the last 40 years. There are more than 1,623 corpsmember positions available at 26 centers statewide; nine of the centers are residential with 600 beds for the corpsmembers assigned to them.

- 2) **CCC projects.** This bill augments the current statutory projects that corpsmembers can engage in to include wildfire prevention and suppression, including forest resiliency; and, technical, administrative, culinary, and other services to individuals and entities engaged in work aligning with currently authorized projects. These additional project types would be requirement to provide opportunities to California Native American tribes and corpsmembers. Further, the bill authorizes the CCC to enter into a contract with a conservation corps established by California Native American tribes for a project or program. There are currently five Tribal Corps that were started/supported in 2023 through funding support from the CCC.
- 3) **CalPERS.** CalPERS pension benefits are principally determined by three factors: age at retirement, final compensation, and years of service (i.e., service credit). Increasing one or more of these factors generally results in a higher pension benefit at retirement.

Current law allows CalPERS members to purchase service credit for their time served in "public service" prior to becoming a CalPERS member, provided the member makes required pension contributions, as specified.

Generally, this option applies to a CalPERS member who initially worked for a public agency in a position or time-base ineligible for CalPERS membership but who later became a CalPERS member. However, CalPERS members can also purchase service credit of up to three years for time they worked with certain national service organizations such as the Peace Corps, AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America), and AmeriCorps.

Currently, CCC corpsmembers are unable to make that commensurate purchase. This bill will enable those corpsmembers who enter into public employment to purchase CalPERS service credit commensurate with their time in the corps.

4) Author's statement:

SB 1207 honors the role that members of the CCC play in protecting our state and environment by allowing them to purchase service credit through the California Public Employees' Retirement System, reinforcing current labor code exemptions, and updating the CCC's statutes to better represent their mission. This measure is especially timely, as this year marks the CCC's 50th anniversary.

The desire to begin saving for retirement should not preclude anyone from participating in a program like the CCC. SB 1207 will bring alignment with similar programs, including the Peace Corps and AmeriCorps, whose participants are already able to earn and purchase service credit for their time in the Corps, while also encouraging corpsmembers to both start and continue a career in state service.

- 5) **Double referral.** This bill is also referred to the Assembly Public Employment and Retirement Committee.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**Support**

California Association of Local Conservation Corps
CCC Foundation

Opposition

None on file

Analysis Prepared by: Paige Brokaw / NAT. RES. /