

Date of Hearing: August 5, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

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

Policy Committee:	Natural Resources	Vote:	13 - 0
	Public Employment and Retirement		6 - 0

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: No Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill (1) amends the California Conservation Corps' (CCC) statutes to expand the scope of authorized projects and to permit CCC to contract with a conservation corps established by one or more California Native American tribes, (2) allows corpsmembers to purchase California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) service credit, and (3) exempts corpsmembers from certain Labor Code requirements.

Specifically, this bill, among other things:

- 1) For purposes of purchasing CalPERS service credit, includes in the definition of "public service" time served as a corpsmember or special corpsmember with the CCC, not to exceed three years; requires a CalPERS member electing to receive credit for their CCC time to make contributions to CalPERS for the service credit cost, as specified; and amends the prohibition in the Public Resources Code on CCC corpsmembers receiving state retirement benefits to make an exception for CalPERS members purchasing service credit under the provisions of this bill, as specified.
- 2) Exempts an individual participating in the CCC or community conservation corps certified by the CCC from certain Labor Code provisions regulating wages, hours, and working conditions and subjects these individuals to certain existing requirements related to overtime.
- 3) Establishes the intent of the Legislature that the young adults who have successfully completed at least one year of service with the corps be recognized for their dedication and development and that all state entities look for paths to include former corpsmembers into their organizations.
- 4) Expands the types of projects individuals participating in the CCC program can engage in, requires these projects to provide opportunities to California Native American tribes and corpsmembers, and authorizes the CCC to enter into a contract with a conservation corps established by one or more California Native American tribes for a project or program.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) CalPERS calculates the cost to purchase Peace Corps, AmeriCorps VISTA, and AmeriCorps service credit using the "present value" cost method, which is intended to be cost-neutral to the employer. Under this method, the member pays the full present value of the additional service credit based on an estimate that includes assumptions with respect to the age at

retirement, salary at retirement, age at death, and the retirement system's investment return. According to CalPERS, while service credit purchases on a present value method are not expected to increase employer contributions, they do increase the risk to the employer in the form of higher volatility in employer rates if underlying assumptions, such as investment returns, do not occur as expected in the future. Based on current data from CalPERS, 377 members have purchased on average 1.6 years of Peace Corps or AmeriCorps "public service" since 2013. Of these members, 237 were state employees at the time of election.

CalPERS reports that if CCC corpsmembers purchase service credits at the same rate as members of Peace Corps, AmeriCorps VISTA, and AmeriCorps, the increased volatility risk to state employers is likely negligible.

- 2) The CCC estimates minor and absorbable costs.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

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.

- 2) **Background.** The CCC, established in 1976, is the oldest and largest state conservation corps program in the country. Its 120,000 members have provided more than 74 million hours of natural resource work and more than 11.3 million hours of emergency response work since its founding. Although the CCC was originally conceived as a labor source for trail maintenance and restoration, it has since evolved into a workforce development program. Corpsmembers now learn various skills during the program and receive their high school diplomas and industry certifications at the conclusion of their service.

Local Conservation Corps (LCCs) or community conservation corps are nonprofit or local government entities that are certified by and have a similar mission as the CCC. LCCs provide job skills training and educational opportunities to young people, primarily ages 18 through 26, while preserving and protecting the environment. There are 14 state-certified LCCs in California, each of which is an individual nonprofit organization serving its local region.

The California Association of Local Conservation Corps argues this bill:

Ensures Corpsmembers are able to purchase comparable service credit toward their public-sector retirement. In fact, the opportunity is already available to other services like AmeriCorps and Peace Corps, where participants are able to purchase up to three years of state service credit. By passing this bill, the Legislature recognizes the civic responsibility and dedication of Corpsmembers, while encouraging them to enter full-time public service.

CCC members are increasingly deployed to perform wildfire and forest resiliency work as well as added “behind the scenes” support for groups performing projects supporting natural resource and energy conservation. While this work might broadly fall into categories of work the CCC is authorized to perform, this bill codifies these activities in CCC’s authorizing statute.

The CCC is authorized to contract with an individual or collective of community conservation corps for a project or program. This bill extends this contract authorization to conservation corps established by one or more California Native American tribes, such as those recently established through the Nature-Based Solutions Tribal Corps Program.

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