

Date of Hearing: July 8, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, GROWTH, AND  
HOUSEHOLD IMPACT

José Luis Solache, Jr., Chair

SB 227 (Grayson) – As Amended April 30, 2025

**SENATE VOTE:** 39-0

**SUBJECT:** Green Empowerment Zone for the Northern Waterfront area of the County of Contra Costa

**SUMMARY:** This bill has an urgency clause updating the administration of the Green Empowerment Zone (GEZ) for Contra Costa County's Northern Waterfront area.

Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Extends the GEZ until 2040.
- 2) Updates the list of cities included in the GEZ and expands the GEZ Board from 10 to 14 to include representatives of the additional cities. Authorizes the legislative body of a city or county to remove land within its jurisdiction from the GEZ by adopting a resolution.
- 3) Removes authority for various stakeholder groups and state government entities to select a GEZ Board representatives and instead authorizes the GEZ Board to select GEZ Board representatives from these groups.
- 4) Specifies GEZ Board terms and actions, processes for establishing GEZ Board representative eligibility, processes for GEZ Board representative removal, and processes for addressing a GEZ Board representative vacancy. Specifies the GEZ Board shall meet at least four times per year and subjects the GEZ Board to the Ralph M. Brown Act which guarantees the public's right to attend and participate in meetings of local legislative bodies.
- 5) Expands the GEZ Board to include seven individuals who reside in the GEZ and who represent environmental or environmental justice organizations or interests.
- 6) States that the bill is urgent in order to facilitate the proper function of the GEZ Board.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Authorizes the establishment of a GEZ for the Northern Waterfront area of Contra Costa County until January 1, 2028 with a specified geography and stated purpose to build upon the comparative advantage provided by the regional concentration of highly skilled energy industry workers by prioritizing access to tax incentives, grants, loan programs, workforce training programs, and private sector investment in the renewable energy sector. Specifies that various cities in Contra Costa County, one city in Solano County, and Contra Costa County may be included in the GEZ upon adoption by the city or county legislative body that states intent to participate in the GEZ. Authorizes the GEZ board of directors to vote to include additional jurisdictions in the GEZ membership. (Government Code (GC) § 7599.100)

- 2) Specifies that the GEZ is comprised of representatives from stakeholder groups who serve as directors (GEZ Board) and tasks the GEZ with: identifying projects and programs that best utilize public dollars and most quickly improve the economic vitality of the Northern Waterfront area of the County of Contra Costa; working with members of Congress and federal officials to gain federal support for projects identified as critical; partnering with the UC, the California State University, community colleges, and the state's other research and educational institutions, as well as private foundations; reviewing state policies and regulations; making recommendations to the Governor that would improve the economic well-being of the region and the quality of life of its residents and; creating an internet website that is managed and updated by an entity designated by the GEZ Board (GC §§ 7599.101 and 7599.102)
- 3) Requires a GEZ Board steering committee, on or before January 1, 2023, to develop metrics to be reported to the Legislature and state departments and agencies gauging the progress of the zone that include, but are not limited to jobs, wages, grants, and workforce training. Requires the GEZ, beginning January 1, 2023 and on or before January 1 of each year to post a report on its website and submit a letter to the Legislature informing that it has been posted. (GC § 7599.103)

**FISCAL EFFECT:** This bill is keyed Non-fiscal by Legislative Counsel

**COMMENTS:** The Northern Waterfront stretching from Hercules to Brentwood via communities like Martinez, Pittsburg, Antioch, and Oakley historically thrived as an industrial hub. In the late 19th century, Port Costa emerged around the Central Pacific Railroad ferry becoming a prominent wheat shipping port. Over the 20th century, the waterfront hosted oil refineries, chemical plants, steel mill, canneries and the nation's last whaling station in Richmond. By 1962, manufacturing employed nearly 40% of the County's workforce. Today, it comprises of less than 6%, indicating significant industrial decline. Starting in 2003, the Northern Waterfront Economic Development Initiative (NWEDI) began gestating key milestones: 2013–2017, industrial land mapping and Regional Strategic Action Plan development across seven partner cities. 2019, official adoption of the Action Plan aimed at revitalizing industrial job clusters. With over 522,000 employed countywide and a low unemployment rate (4–5%), the region still offers solid workforce foundations but needs upskilling efforts targeted at replacing legacy industrial jobs. NWEDI seeks to generate 18,000 new jobs in advanced clusters.

The GEZ's PPA pilot roadmap builds out the backbone for land, infrastructure, and policy to catalyze clean-tech manufacturing zones. With governance looking to balance local, agency, labor, educational, and environmental voices, and a clear project pipeline anchored to training and equity.

The Northern Waterfront Priority Production Areas (PPA) project spans two years and targets foundational planning and infrastructure tasks:

- 1) Industrial Land Inventory: Mapping existing zoned industrial land across Concord, Antioch, Pittsburg, Oakley, and unincorporated County areas.

- 2) Infrastructure Capacity Analysis: Assessing critical utilities (power, water, broadband, wastewater) to ensure readiness for clean energy and manufacturing growth.
- 3) Economic Strategy Updates: Aligning with the broader Northern Waterfront Economic Development Initiative to support five business clusters (transportation, advanced manufacturing, biotech, ag-tech, clean-tech) aiming for 18,000 new jobs by 2035.
- 4) These efforts are supported by a \$500,000 Metropolitan Transportation Commission technical assistance grant, enabling collaborative, regional planning.

**Author's Statement:** According to the author, "The San Francisco Bay Area is the second-largest oil refining center on the West Coast and home to four refineries, three of which are located in Contra Costa County. In 2020, the Marathon Martinez Refinery was indefinitely idled, resulting in the immediate loss of 700 jobs. This abrupt closure deeply affected not only the workers and their families but also served as a warning signal to the broader community about the volatility of this industry and the potential risk to thousands more refinery jobs amid our state's shift toward clean energy. In response, I authored AB 844 in 2021, which established the Green Empowerment Zone for the Northern Waterfront area of Contra Costa County (GEZ). The GEZ builds upon federal, state, and regional partnerships to attract tax incentives, grants, loan programs, and private-sector investments, all focused on fostering our region's clean and green energy economy.

Although the GEZ Board of Directors already includes a diverse array of stakeholders, there is an absence of representation from justice organizations. This leaves a critical perspective unaddressed. Additionally, while the Board has the authority to incorporate new cities, explicitly codifying the inclusion of new cities in statute will ensure sustained and proactive regional participation. SB 227 addresses these gaps by formally expanding the Green Empowerment Zone to include El Cerrito, Pinole, Richmond, and San Pablo, and by adding environmental justice representatives to the Board. In addition, this bill extends the Board's authorization date to 2040, providing long-term stability and a framework for sustained regional collaboration. By incorporating these additional voices and extending authorization, SB 227 strengthens the Board's ability to leverage regional assets, facilitates a just transition to a lower-carbon economy, and creates pathways for equitable economic growth in Contra Costa County".

## **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

### **Support**

None on file.

### **Opposition**

None on file.

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