

SENATE THIRD READING
SB 675 (Padilla)
As Amended August 13, 2026
Majority vote

SUMMARY

Restructures the governing board of the Imperial County Air Pollution Control District (district) from the five-member county board of supervisors to a 11-member board consisting of one county, five city, one irrigation district, and four public members. Imposes several new reporting and planning duties on the district

Major Provisions

- 1) Requires, effective July 1, 2027, 11 members of the district board to be appointed as follows:
 - a) One member representing the board of supervisors, appointed by a majority of supervisors.
 - b) One city council member from each of the five supervisorial districts. Those five members shall be selected by city selection committees representing the cities of that supervisorial district.
 - c) A representative from an irrigation district that provides water and retail power services in Imperial County (i.e., Imperial Irrigation District).
 - d) Four public members, appointed by the supervisor and city council members at a public hearing, according to the following:
 - i) A physician or public health professional actively practicing within the district and specializing in the health effects of air pollution on vulnerable populations.
 - ii) A person representing environmental justice interests and who works directly with communities within the district that are most significantly burdened by, and vulnerable to, high levels of pollution.
 - iii) A person with a background in labor that understands worker health and safety.
 - iv) A person actively working in commercial agricultural commodity production.
- 2) Requires all members to be appointed on the basis of their demonstrated interest and proven ability in the field of air pollution control and their understanding of the needs of the general public in connection with the air pollution problems of the Imperial Air Basin.
- 3) Requires all members to reside within the district boundaries.
- 4) Provides board members compensation of \$100 per day, not to exceed \$1,000 per month, for attending district board or committee meetings and board-approved district business, as well as actual and necessary expenses.
- 5) Requires a governing board vacancy to be filled by appointment in the same manner as the vacating member was appointed.

- 6) Permits a governing board member to be removed at any time in the same manner as the member was appointed.
- 7) Requires the governing board to consult with the United States Navy and the United States Marine Corps on all permitting, rules, regulations, and planning issues that have the potential to impact the mission of the United States Navy and the United States Marine Corps, and to designate one member to serve as the liaison to the United States Navy and the United States Marine Corps.
- 8) Requires the district to do all of the following:
 - a) Create an internet website providing public access to air district data, including all the following:
 - i) Agendas and minutes of the district board.
 - ii) All current permit information, as specified.
 - iii) All settled enforcement actions, as specified.
 - iv) The face sheets of notices of violation or notices to comply.
 - v) All documents related to the Air Toxics "Hot Spots" Information and Assessment Act of 1987.
 - vi) The district budget, including revenue and expense projections and actuals.
- 9) Requires all district expenses that not met by existing district funding sources (i.e., grants, subventions, permit fees, penalties, and specified surcharges or fees) to be provided by an annual per capita assessment on each city and county included in the district.
- 10) Declares the intent of the Legislature that the Imperial County employees who currently work for the district will not be affected by the governing board's expansion and their jobs will be safe.

COMMENTS

There are 35 air districts covering California's 58 counties. Of the 21 single county districts, eight have boards with city representation and 13, including Imperial, have boards that are only county supervisors.

Imperial County lies in the southeast corner of California, bordered by San Diego County to the west, Riverside County to the north, Arizona to the east, and Baja California to the south. Imperial County faces unique air pollution challenges, such as hard to regulate sources including fugitive dust from the Salton Sea dry lakebed, cross-border traffic, and emissions from sources in Mexico.

Like other rural, single-county air districts, the district is governed by the county board of supervisors. Imperial is the most populous county (181,000) with a district governed solely by the county board of supervisors. The county also has relatively more complex and challenging air pollution issues than other rural counties.

In 2019, AB 423 (Gloria), Chapter 744, Statutes of 2019, restructured the governing board of the San Diego County Air Pollution Control District to be governed by an 11-member board consisting of two county supervisors, six council members or mayors from specified cities, and three public members. San Diego has the largest population (3.3 million) by far of any county air district. Prior to AB 423, San Diego was the only urban county air district with no city representation. This bill is largely based on AB 423.

Like AB 423, this bill shifts the balance of district governing power from county supervisors to city and public members. In San Diego, the district board moved from the five county supervisors to an 11-member board consisting of two county supervisors, six city council members or mayors, and three public members. In this bill, the shift is more pronounced, as county supervisors would go from 100% of the board to 10%. Thus, the bill would shift the Imperial district from the most populous air district with a county-only board to the most rural district with a non-county majority. This bill's public member slots for physician and environmental justice representative are consistent with San Diego. The public member slots for labor and agriculture representatives are unprecedented.

According to the Author

The residents of Imperial County are uniquely situated at an intersection of multiple air quality issues. The county has some of the worst air pollution in the country, the lakebed of the receding Salton Sea and dust storms contributing to some of the highest asthma hospitalization rates in the state. Imperial County's Air Pollution Control District board should properly reflect the region's diverse range of voices on air quality issues.

Arguments in Support

Among others in support of the bill, the City of Imperial writes that its residents, who continually deal with poor air quality, find it difficult to get information about pollution sources from the Imperial County Air District and "feel disconnected from oversight of pollution sources given the structure of the (district) board." The city argues that restructuring the district's governing board from the current makeup of five county supervisors and replacing it with 10 members representing the county, cities in the valley, and community members that have relevant expertise will result in "a broader representation of community interests." The city further contends that this bill addresses transparency issues by requiring the district to post on its website "information on all current permits, pending applications, as well as enforcement actions. Additionally, detailed budget information for the district will need to be publicly available as well."

Arguments in Opposition

Among others in opposition to the bill, the Imperial County Board of Supervisors writes that restructuring the governing board represents a significant shift away from local accountability and County oversight over an agency "that is closely tied to land use, agriculture, public health, emergency response, infrastructure, economy development, Lithium Valley implementation, and regional planning." The county states it is afraid this governance change "could create uncertainty regarding administrative responsibility, staffing, legal oversight, fiscal accountability, and coordination with County priorities." Finally, the county notes it "has serious concerns regarding the bill's unfunded mandates."

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, one-time and ongoing annual costs of an unknown but potentially significant amount for the Imperial County Air District to implement the requirements of this bill. If the Commission on State Mandates determines these costs to be a reimbursable state mandate, the state would be obligated to reimburse Imperial County for its expenses (General Fund).

VOTES**SENATE FLOOR: 39-0-1**

YES: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Grove, Hurtado, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

ABS, ABST OR NV: Reyes

ASM NATURAL RESOURCES: 9-4-1

YES: Bryan, Connolly, Garcia, Haney, Kalra, Pellerin, Schultz, Wicks, Zbur

NO: Ellis, Alanis, Hoover, Macedo

ABS, ABST OR NV: Muratsuchi

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 11-4-0

YES: Wicks, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache

NO: Hoover, Dixon, Ta, Tangipa

UPDATED

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