

Date of Hearing: June 24, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 899 (Grove) – As Amended May 14, 2026

Policy Committee: Natural Resources

Vote: 13 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill requires the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force (Task Force), in cooperation with specified state entities, to assess the health costs and impacts of wildfire smoke.

Specifically, this bill, among other things:

- 1) Requires, on or before July 1, 2028, the Task Force, in cooperation with the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), the Air Resources Board (ARB), and the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), to assess the health costs and impacts of wildfire smoke using existing wildfire smoke and health data, including data from local, state, federal, and academic sources.
- 2) Requires the Task Force, in developing the assessment, to do all of the following:
 - a) Estimate the number of emergency room visits and deaths from the smoke of wildfires in California since July 1, 2018.
 - b) Develop a cost estimate for health care costs resulting from smoke of wildfires in California since July 1, 2018.
 - c) Develop a model to determine the approximate health benefits, both for cost and human health impacts, of achieving the goals identified in the state’s “Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan” (Action Plan).
 - d) Make recommendations on how the Action Plan can increase health benefits.
- 3) Authorizes the Task Force to enter into contracts with an independent group to assist with the assessment.
- 4) Requires the Task Force to include the assessment and additional actions to reduce the health impact of wildfire smoke in the first update to the state’s Action Plan that occurs after the completion of the assessment.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) OEHHA estimates a one-time General Fund cost of at least \$1.6 million to contract with an outside entity to coordinate with other agencies and help develop the required assessment. Specifically, OEHHA notes that to conduct the retrospective assessment, the office would

work with an outside contractor to characterize population exposure to wildfire smoke and link those exposures to emergency room visits, deaths, and related costs. To develop the prospective model, OEHHA anticipates coordinating with other agencies to (a) estimate the expected changes in wildfire smoke emissions that would result from achieving the goals in the Action Plan, (b) use those emission estimates to model corresponding changes in population exposures to wildfire smoke, and (c) apply those exposure scenarios to estimate the resulting health impacts or benefits and the associated costs of achieving the Action Plan's goals.

- 2) ARB estimates a one-time General Fund contracting cost of \$1.4 million to implement this bill. ARB notes it would need to conduct photochemical modeling to estimate the reduction in exposure to smoke and air toxics from achieving the goals identified in the Action Plan. Further, ARB notes existing research studies have limited sampling of toxic emissions from burned furnishings, appliances, electronics, vehicles, and batteries. To develop full-scale emission factors for structure and vehicle fires, ARB reports it would likely fund full-scale burn experiments of human-made materials to fill existing research gaps in toxic emission characterization. The contract would also include comprehensive chemical analysis of emitted constituents to characterize into toxic emission factors that could then be used in ARB's ongoing fire toxic emission inventory.
- 3) The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), which serves on the Executive Committee of the Task Force, estimates a one-time General Fund cost of \$500,000 to contract with an outside entity to assist with the development of the required assessment.
- 4) One-time General Fund cost of an unknown amount, likely in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, for CDPH to assist with the development of the wildfire smoke assessment.

COMMENTS:

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

Wildfire smoke is impacting the health of millions of Californians, yet we do not consistently measure the full public health and economic costs. SB 899 helps us better understand these impacts so the state can make informed decisions and ensure our policies reflect the true cost of wildfires on our communities.

- 2) **Background.** There is general scientific consensus about the value of wildfire mitigation activities for forest health, ecological values, habitat, water quality, and other natural resources. However, catastrophic wildfires also impact public health through smoke inhalation. These public health impacts can be felt hundreds and even thousands of miles away as smoke travels through the atmosphere.

The major components of wildfire emissions are particulate matter and gases, including carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, and volatile organic compounds, such as formaldehyde and benzene. If fires reach the wildland-urban interface, other toxic chemicals are likely to be released from the burning of household or industrial materials, such as plastics, pesticides, and other hazardous waste. Wildfire smoke is unhealthy to breathe and can be especially dangerous for children, the elderly, pregnant women, and people with heart or respiratory conditions.

In June 2026, the Governor's Office announced the administration recently fast-tracked 400 wildfire prevention projects across nearly 100,000 acres and accelerated prescribed and cultural burning through coordinated action, streamlined processes, and expanded partnerships. In line with these efforts, the Task Force also recently released an updated Action Plan (2026-2031) to guide the state's next phase of work to protect communities and restore landscapes.

Writing in support of this bill, a coalition of organizations argues there is a lack of understanding about how fuels reduction investments impact health outcomes for rural and urban communities. As discussed in a 2023 report from the California Council on Science and Technology, the coalition contends, "this missing data leaves policy holders with incomplete information about the true costs of these massive fires, and the direct human health benefits and health cost controls that come from investing in wildfire fuels mitigation." The coalition argues this bill empowers policy makers and stakeholders with an assessment to fully understand the value of those investments, and that is vital for continuing "to address how the state's strategies to restore resiliency to the state's landscapes through fuels mitigation also improves the quality of life for all Californians impacted by these smoke events."

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