

Date of Hearing: August 5, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 990 (Grove) – As Amended March 25, 2026

Policy Committee: Transportation

Vote: 16 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill temporarily allows placement along the highway of signs indicating business-specific services in the City of Ridgecrest in Kern County.

Specifically, this bill directs the Department of Transportation (Caltrans), until January 1, 2037, to allow the placement of information signs along southbound State Route (SR) 395 just before the SR 178 eastbound exit and along northbound SR 395 just before the South China Lake Boulevard northbound exit that identify specific roadside businesses that offer fuel, food, lodging, electric vehicle charging, camping, 24-hour pharmacy services or approved attractions.

FISCAL EFFECT:

Negligible costs to Caltrans.

COMMENTS:

State law requires Caltrans to adopt regulations, consistent with federal law, that allow the placement, near exits on freeways located in rural areas, of information signs identifying specific roadside businesses offering fuel, food, lodging, electric vehicle charging facilities, camping services, approved 24-hour pharmacy services or approved attractions, and that prescribe the standards for those signs. The law generally prohibits Caltrans from approving the placement of such a sign within an urban area with a population of 5,000 or more, though the law provides exemptions for certain highways near the cities of Lincoln and Truckee.

Ridgecrest is a remote city in eastern Kern County. It is one of the last stops for a variety of services for long distances in any direction. However, bill supporters, such as the mayor of Ridgecrest and the local chamber of commerce, describe the city and its many motorist-oriented services as not readily visible from the highway. Yet, because the city's population exceeds 5,000 residents, state law prohibits the placement on the highway of signs indicating the specific businesses (usually through commercial logos) offering services in Ridgecrest. This bill would temporarily allow the placement of such business-specific signs on the highway near Ridgecrest.

Mayor Travis Endicott writes on behalf of the city in support of the bill:

Businesses in Ridgecrest rely heavily on pass-through travelers along California State Route 395, yet many motorists are unaware of the services, restaurants, lodging, retail options, medical facilities, fuel, and other amenities available just minutes off the highway...SB 990 provides

a reasonable and targeted solution by requiring the Department to allow the placement of information signs along *southbound* State Route 395 just before the State Route 178 eastbound exit and along *northbound* State Route 395 just before the South China Lake Boulevard northbound exit...SB 990 achieves a thoughtful balance by preserving consistent highway signage standards, enhancing driver safety, advancing national security priorities, and supporting the long-term economic sustainability of Ridgecrest along the highway corridor.

The committee is not aware of opposition to this bill.

Analysis Prepared by: Jay Dickenson / APPR. / (916) 319-2081