

## **AB 623 - Reduce Red Tape for Coastal Fire Protection**

### **SUMMARY**

AB 623 would exempt fuel modification projects from the requirements of both the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the California Coastal Act (CCA), as well as exempt fuel reduction projects from CCA requirements.

### **EXISTING LAW**

Under current law, CEQA requires any individual undertaking a project that may have a significant impact on the environment to submit an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Similarly, under current law, Section 30600 of Public Resources Code requires any person or agency to obtain a coastal development permit before undertaking any development in a coastal zone. Finally, Section 4291(a) of Public Resources Code requires property owners to maintain 100 feet of defensible space around any structure they own, control, lease, operate, or maintain.

### **ISSUE**

California has continually experienced devastating and destructive wildfires over the last decade. In fact, wildfires have been particularly devastating in recent years and appear to be getting worse. According to data from CalFire, fourteen of the twenty most destructive wildfires and thirteen of the twenty largest wildfires in California history have occurred in the last 10 years.

Additionally, the state has experienced some of its most deadly wildfires in recent years, with nine of the twenty most deadly wildfires in California's history occurring in the past decade. For example, the Camp Fire in 2018 claimed 85 lives and the fires in Eaton and Palisades this year claiming a total of 29 lives.

As a result, it is incumbent upon Californians to do their part in reducing wildfire risk. Unfortunately, while well intentioned, CEQA and the CCA impose onerous requirements on property owners, significantly limiting their ability to undertake critical fuel modification and fuel reduction projects.

These lifesaving wildfire prevention projects include planned landscape designs that reduce the threat of wildfire, creating a fire-resistant buffer between homes that are adjacent to areas of natural plant life, or can involve strategic tree and brush

management, such as selective thinning and chipping, to create healthier, more fire-resilient ecosystems.

However, despite the positive benefits of such projects, both CEQA and the CCA require Californians to complete Environmental Impact Reports and receive approval before undertaking fuel modification or reduction, which may have a significant effect on the environment.

Furthermore, this superfluous requirement creates unnecessary limitations on property owners and their ability to undertake fuel modification projects in order to maintain defensible space. In turn, such requirements are a strong disincentive for individuals wishing to undertake fuel modification projects and as a result reduces our state's preparedness and ability to combat wildfires.

### **SOLUTION**

AB 623 would exempt fuel modification projects that are meant to maintain a defensible space of 100 feet from a building or structure from the requirements of both CEQA and the CCA, as well as exempt fuel reduction projects from CCA requirements.

AB 623 provides a common sense solution to help streamline existing regulations and empowers individuals to do their part in reducing the risk of wildfires in California.

### **SIMILAR LEGISLATION**

AB 522 (2022, Fong) - Chaptered  
AB 431 (2021, Patterson) - Chaptered  
SB 63 (2021, Stern) - Chaptered  
AB 3074 (2020, Friedman) - Chaptered  
AB 38 (2019, Wood) - Chaptered

### **SUPPORT**

None on File.

### **OPPOSITION**

None on File.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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