

VINCE FONG

MEMBER FOR THE 32ND ASSEMBLY DISTRICT



FACT SHEET

AB 297 – Extending Advance Payments for Fire Prevention Grants

IN BRIEF

To start wildfire prevention projects, grantees must often use their own funds to buy critical equipment or supplies in advance, essentially taking a loan from the state until their grant funding arrives.

Assembly Bill 297 will prevent disastrous wildfires by expediting funding for wildfire prevention projects.

Specifically, the bill extends the authorization provided to the Director of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) to send advance payments from a fire prevention grant from 2024 to 2034.

BACKGROUND & ISSUE

The Fire Prevention Grants Program provides funding for wildfire prevention projects and activities in and near fire threatened communities that focus on increasing the protection of people, structures, and communities. Groups eligible for grants include, but are not limited to, local agencies, resource conservation districts, fire safe councils, the California Conservation Corps, certified local conservation corps, University of California Cooperative Extension, Native American tribes, and qualified nonprofit organizations.¹ Funded activities include hazardous fuels reduction, wildfire prevention planning, and wildfire prevention education with an emphasis on improving public health and safety while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

AB 1956 (Limón, 2018) gave the CAL FIRE Director the authority to send advance payments from a fire prevention grant until 2024. The advance payment can be up to 25 percent of the

grant award, or alternatively, up to 50 percent of either the grant award or the cost of equipment, whichever amount is less, for the purpose of purchasing necessary equipment.

Since 2018, this authorization has been widely utilized by the CAL FIRE Director to provide advance payments to 342 grantees, with a 100 percent approval rate. Justification for advance payments range from deposits needed to start contracting work to the funding needed to buy tools ahead of time.

SOLUTION

The state has set an ambitious goal of treating 500,000 acres per year to prevent wildfires.² To reach that goal, projects such as those funded by the Fire Prevention Grants Program will help keep communities safe.

AB 297 will continue to provide needed flexibility to local agencies and groups to perform wildfire prevention projects by extending the advance payment authorization to the CAL FIRE Director.

SUPPORT

American Property Casualty Insurance Association
Association of California Water Agencies
California Forestry Association
County of Placer
Pacific Forest Trust
Rural County Representatives of California
Sierra Business Council

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¹ https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180AB1956

² <https://www.fire.ca.gov/media/ps4p2vck/californiawildfireandforestresilienceactionplan.pdf>

