



ASSEMBLYMEMBER JOAQUIN ARAMBULA, M.D. 31ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

AB 2528 Water-Constrained Land for Renewables

Summary

Central Valley residents deserve to live in healthy communities powered by renewable energy. AB 2528 ensures that California meets its climate goals, protects groundwater, and improves air quality by increasing the availability of land for renewable energy projects.

Background

To achieve its goal of a net zero economy by 2045, California must add more than 114,000 Megawatts of new utility-scale renewables to the grid, including at least 70,000 Megawatts of utility-scale solar.¹ One possible solution is to reimagine components of The Williamson Act which currently encumbers 16 million acres of agricultural land, equivalent to 16% of the state's land mass. The need for solar projects, alone is estimated to be more than 600,000 acres. This nexus between clean energy goals and land availability demands strategic planning and creativity.

Parallel to California's clean energy goals is The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, which mandates local water management agencies to bring groundwater use to sustainable levels by the early 2040s – a timeline that aligns closely with our state's climate and energy targets.² The new reality is that the need to conserve and manage vital water resources will unavoidably place many agricultural landowners at risk of losing the ability to farm their land with no viable economic alternative.

This confluence of water sustainability needs and clean energy demand creates an opportunity to craft an approach that addresses multiple economic and environmental goals. The promise of a carbon free future is the creation of good-paying jobs, children breathing cleaner air, and mitigation of the worst

¹CPUC Preferred System Plan <https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/industries-and-topics/electrical-energy/electric-power-procurement/long-term-procurement-planning/2022-irp-cycle-events-and-materials>

impacts of climate change on our communities and economy.

Related Legislation

SB 100 (De León, 2018) established both Renewable energy targets and the state's first grid decarbonization targets, which call for a fully decarbonized grid by 2045.

SB 1020 (Laird, 2022) accelerated the decarbonization goal in SB 100 by establishing mandatory grid decarbonization targets of 90% by 2035, 95% by 2040 and 100% by 2045, with no less than 60% of the state's electricity to come from renewable energy. Without creative solutions to find land to site these projects, California will miss all of these critical goals.

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (Williamson Act) enables local governments to contract with landowners who agree to limit their land to agricultural use. However, the Williamson Act has remained largely unchanged since its inception and has become extremely costly to local governments due to the elimination of state subsidies and problematic for landowners as groundwater for agricultural use is becoming increasingly scarce.

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act requires local agencies to develop plans to mitigate the impacts on those that rely on water from these overdrafted aquifers. Water curtailment can be challenging for landowners without viable alternatives uses of their land.

This Bill

Provides a streamlined Williamson Act cancellation option to facilitate faster siting of energy infrastructure

² <https://www.ppic.org/publication/solar-energy-and-groundwater-in-the-san-joaquin-valley/>



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on former agricultural parcels and provide relief to landowners and local communities. Simplifying Williamson Act cancellations on overdrafted basins addresses SGMA challenges and renewable energy land constraints while providing farmers with alternative economic opportunities for their land.

Support

Large-scale Solar Association (Sponsor)
Agricultural Council of California
Alliance Ag Services
Alliance Appraisal
Almond Alliance
American Clean Power Association
Avantus
Britz Helm
California Association of Winegrape Growers
California Solar Energy Industries Association
California State Association of Electrical Workers
California State Council of Laborers
Candela Renewables
Clearway Energy Group LLC
Coalition of California Utility Employees
Forefront Power, LLC
IBEW Local Union 477
Independent Energy Producers Association
Intersect Power
Longroad Energy Management, LLC
Portwood Farms
Regenerate California Innovation, Inc.
RWE
Schmiederer Family Farms
Tjaarda Ranch LLC
Tule Fog Farm Land LLC
Western Growers Association

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