

The California State Legislature is back in session, and legislators have introduced thousands of bills. The 2021-2022 session kicks off a new two-year legislative cycle, which means bills that are not passed in this session have the opportunity to be considered and passed in the subsequent session. While legislators will likely spend a significant amount of time addressing the Covid-19 pandemic, there are a number of time-sensitive environmental and environmental justice issues that also demand their attention, including climate change, wildfires, and water safety. The Senate and the Assembly are both working on versions of a 2022 Natural Resources Bond ([SB-45](#) and [AB-1500](#)), which presents a critical opportunity for funding the State's environmental initiatives.

Governor Newsom's [proposed Budget](#) also includes funding related to wildfires, climate change, and environmental justice, which suggests legislators may have success passing bills in these areas. (In past sessions, Newsom has vetoed environmental bills on the grounds that they were too weak or lacked funding sources.) Newsom's proposal includes allocating nearly \$1 billion for forest health, resiliency, and fire prevention projects, and \$200 million to increase the State's firefighting capacity. To meet California's 2035 and 2045 zero-emission vehicle goals, the Budget lays out a \$1.5 billion GHG emissions reduction strategy, including \$1 billion in subsidies for zero-emission vehicles and infrastructure. The Budget also proposes \$300 million to clean up toxic sites and reform the Department of Toxic Substances Control, and it creates a new approach to pesticide regulation to support safe and sustainable agriculture. You can follow the Budget process [here](#).

Here are some of the highlights.

Climate Change

Climate change continues to be a major priority for legislators. Introduced bills propose to tackle the issue from a number of angles: building decarbonization, increased electric vehicle penetration, and carbon sequestration from natural and working lands.

- **SB-30, 31, 32:** First-term Senator Dave Cortese introduced three related bills, collectively referred to as the "Building Decarbonization" package. [SB-30](#) would require all state-owned buildings to be carbon neutral by 2035 and prohibit state funding for projects that are connected to the natural gas grid. [SB-31](#) focuses on creating, identifying, and implementing programs and funding to promote existing and new building decarbonization. [SB-32](#) requires cities and counties to amend their general plans to include building decarbonization requirements for newly constructed buildings.

- [AB-11](#) (Ward) and [AB-51](#) (Quirk) both address the Strategic Growth Council's [Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program](#), including provisions to establish criteria for regional climate plans and entities to manage these plans.
- [SB-260](#) (Weiner), which is co-authored by Senators Cristina Garcia, Karla, and Min and Assembly Members Carrillo, Chiu, Robert Rivas, Stone, and Ting, would require large corporations to publicly disclose their GHG emissions and require the California Air Resources Board to set emissions reduction targets for covered corporations.
- [SB-1](#) (Atkins) would establish a California Sea Level Rise State and Regional Support Collaborative, which would bring together key state officials to address and mitigate sea level rise, and authorize the Collaborative to grant up to \$100 million annually to local governments for projects related to sea level rise.
- [SB-83](#) (Allen) would create a low-interest loan program within California's Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank to help local jurisdictions purchase vulnerable coastal properties in their jurisdictions. A version of this bill was originally introduced during the 2020-2021 session as SB-1293.
- [AB-52](#) (Frazier) would require CARB to monitor and regulate GHG emissions from wildfires, while dedicating Greenhouse Gas Reduction Funds (GGRF) for wildfire mitigation and prevention.
- [AB-284](#) (R. Rivas) would require CARB to identify a 2045 climate goal for natural and working lands that includes GHG emissions reductions and carbon sequestration benefits.
- [SB-27](#) (Skinner) would also require CARB to establish carbon removal and sequestration targets for natural and working lands and count reductions when calculating climate change goals. It would also create a registry of carbon removal and sequestration projects to track projects and help them secure funding.
- [AB-585](#) (L. Rivas), which is co-authored by Assembly Members Bloom and Cristina Garcia and Senator Eggman, proposes to create an Extreme Heat and Community Resilience Program, and related Fund, which would be used coordinate and fund efforts to address climate change and extreme heat, including the construction of cool roofs, hydration stations, and community cooling centers, public planning processes, and education campaigns.
- [SB-372](#) (Leyva) aims to tackle medium- and heavy-duty vehicle pollution by providing funding and non-financial resources to help such fleets transition to zero-emission vehicles.
- [AB-96](#) (O'Donnell) would extend GGRF allocations for the commercial deployment of existing zero- and near-zero-emission heavy-duty truck technology for an additional three years (through 2026) and allocate 20% of this funding for near-zero technology.
- [SB-339](#) (Weiner), which is co-authored by Senator Wieckowski and Assembly

Members Chiu and Ting, would create a pilot program for mileage-based revenue collection, which, if successful, could be used as an alternative to the [gas tax](#).

Wildfires

Wildfire prevention, mitigation, and resiliency are top priorities for legislators, and dozens of bills have been introduced this session. These policy bills complement and expand upon substantial allocations in the proposed Budget.

- [SB-55](#) (Stern and Allen) would impose duties on local governments, prohibiting them from creating or approving new developments in high fire hazard severity zones and state responsibility areas.
- [SB-244](#) (Archuleta), which is co-authored by Senators Dodd and Hertzberg and Assembly Members Arambula, Bauer-Kahan, Flora, and Cristina Garcia, would require lithium-ion batteries to be disposed of in designated battery recycling containers.
- [SB-12](#) (McGuire), which is co-authored by Senators Atkins, Caballero, and Dodd, would require local governments to include comprehensive retrofit strategies to reduce the risk of property loss and damage during wildfires in housing elements or hazard mitigation plans. Areas with very high fire risks would be required to adopt zoning requirements and implement fire mitigation strategies.
- [AB-297](#) (Gallagher), introduced by Assembly Members Gallagher, Bigelow, Dahle, and Patterson and co-authored by Assembly Members Choi, Cunningham, Flora, Fong, Kiley, Lackey, Mathis, Seyarto, Smith, Valladares, Voepel, and Waldron and Senators Jones, Nielsen, and Ochoa Bogh, proposes to continuously appropriate \$480,000,000 to the Department of Forestry and Fire Prevention and \$20,000,000 to the California Conservation Corps for fire prevention activities. Funding would come from GGRF.
- [AB-981](#) (Frazier) would establish the California Fire Safe Council in the Natural Resources Agency, which would be tasked with identifying programs to address and minimize the risks of wildfire and to coordinate the implementation of those programs. It also proposes a \$7 million appropriation from GGRF. (The current [California Fire Safe Council](#) is a non-profit corporation that grew out of a Cal Fire project, and it is unclear whether this bill would create a new Council or place the existing Council under the authority of the Natural Resources Agency.)

Environmental Justice

A number of bills address environmental justice issues and promote equity. These bills establish programs that provide funding and subsidies to help disadvantaged and disproportionately impacted communities access resources, address legacy pollution and

contaminated sites, and create more stringent regulations for sources of pollution. Legislation that addresses Covid-related water insecurity, as well as pre-existing water safety and accessibility issues, has also been introduced. The Governor's proposed Budget also includes funding for environmental justice, focusing on toxics and agricultural pesticides.

- [SB-37](#) (Cortese) would expand listing and monitoring requirements for hazardous waste facilities and contaminated public drinking water wells, while removing CEQA exemptions for projects included on the Cortese list.
- [SB-42](#) (Wieckowski) proposes the establishment of a Board of Environmental Safety in the Department of Toxic Substances Control. The Board would conduct public meetings, hear and decide appeals of hazardous waste facility permit decisions, and propose statutory changes for hazardous waste management.
- [SB-222](#) (Dodd), co-authored by Senator Gonzalez and Assembly Members Bloom and Robert Rivas, proposes to create a Water Affordability Assistance Fund to help low-income ratepayers afford drinking water and wastewater services.
- [SB-560](#) (Rubio) would create the Climate Pollution Reduction in Homes Initiative, which would provide financial assistance to low-income households for the purchase of zero-carbon-emitting appliances and low-income weatherization projects to improve air quality and public health in low-income communities.
- [AB-1069](#) (Lackey) builds on the [Governor's Executive Order on Zero-Emission Vehicles](#) and endeavors to create access for low-income communities by calling for 60% of new zero-emission passenger vehicle sales to be by or on behalf of persons from an underrepresented community.
- [AB-1087](#) (Chiu) would create Community Resilience Hubs and require the Public Utilities Commission to allocate revenues collected from electrical corporations to fund grant programs through these Hubs. Grants would be used to fund "holistic community-driven building upgrade projects that demonstrate community engagement in all phases, demonstrate multistakeholder partnerships, reflect the geographic diversity of the state," and are installed at community institutions or qualified housing sites.
- [SB-499](#) (Leyva) would prohibit land use elements from designating land uses that have the potential to significantly degrade local air, water, or soil quality. Land uses that adversely impact health outcomes in disadvantaged communities or a racially and ethnically concentrated area of poverty would also be prohibited.