

***Action Alert *Action Alert *Action Alert *Action Alert *Action Alert ***

AB 2537 This bill will extend the volunteerism sunset clause for three more years. To read this bill, see the link at the end of this Action Alert.

Help Needed To Guarantee Community Volunteerism and Protect Prevailing Wages in Watershed Restoration and Education!

Action needed by April when A.B. 2537 will go to the Assembly Labor Committee.

Background

In 2003, an interpretation by the California Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) of Labor over Code Section 1720 jeopardized the participation of volunteers for restoration work funded wholly or in part by public funds. Without a solution on this issue, many organizations would have been unable to continue with their community outreach, volunteer involvement, and public education programs.

The DIR interpretation to require payment of prevailing wages for all participants, including volunteers, working on projects deemed to be “public works” would have significantly impacted the activities of hundreds of California’s watershed groups, classroom service projects, and community organizations that rely on volunteer involvement. This would have essentially eliminated many watershed and education groups using State funding from being able to engage local residents and students in restoration efforts happening in their communities, including scout troops, private landowner volunteers, school teachers and students, and conservation corps teams.

The California Watershed Coalition is focused on finding a solution that will protect fair wages for laborers, and will preserve volunteer opportunities for Californians wanting to participate in restoration, education and outreach projects in their communities.

The Issue at Hand

The legislation from 2004 that the California Watershed Coalition supported (A.B. 2690 by Assembly Member Loni Hancock) provided relief from the DIR interpretation and allowed volunteers to participate in their community projects. The bill was passed near-unanimously through both houses, and included a sunset clause for the bill of January 1, 2009. The Coalition has been working for the past few months to address the issue of the pending sunset clause.

Assembly Member Warren Furutani from Long Beach has authored A.B. 2537 that would extend the sunset clause included in the 2004 legislation for another three years. The California Watershed Coalition strongly endorses this approach and needs your help to keep the bill alive and moving forward.

What you can do to help now!

Write your state Assembly Member and urge him/her to support A.B. 2537. To find your Assembly person, visit <http://www.assembly.ca.gov/acs/acsframeset7text.htm>.

Send copies of your letters to Assembly Member Warren Furutani and let him know you support his effort to protect volunteerism and prevailing wages.

Finally, please send the Coalition a copy of your letter at the e-mail addresses below, so we can include you in our future efforts to resolve this situation.

Assembly Member Warren Furutani
State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0014

For more information

For more information concerning AB 2537 visit www.watershednetwork.org, or contact Michael Wellborn of the California Watershed Network, (714) 932-8689, or email: michael@watershednetwork.org.

To read the text of A.B. 2537, visit <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/bilinfo.html> and search for "2537".

The California Watershed Coalition operates as an ad-hoc effort for outreach on statewide issues by the above listed non-profit organization partners. Each of the partner organizations is a well-recognized leader in watershed protection and restoration. Through our combined efforts over the past four years, the Coalition has achieved new levels of success in resolving issues with state agencies and the Legislature on behalf of community-based non-profit groups all across California.

#####