



AB 2537: The Community Engagement in Offshore Wind Act

SUMMARY

AB 2537 will establish the Local and Tribal Communities Offshore Wind Capacity Building Fund, which will enhance the ability of local communities and tribes to actively participate in the offshore wind development process.

BACKGROUND

Over the past few decades, California has established ambitious clean energy goals, including a requirement for 100% renewable and zero-carbon energy resources by the end of 2045. One fundamental component of California's strategy to meet these goals is the development of offshore wind. In 2022, the state set dual goals of 5 gigawatts (GW) of offshore wind energy by 2030 and 25 GW by 2045. California is not alone in this endeavor. In 2021, President Biden set a goal of deploying 30 GW of offshore wind electricity generation by 2030.

With the aim of meeting these state and federal goals, in 2022, AB 209 (Committee on Budget) established the Voluntary Offshore Wind and Coastal Resources Protection Program to support activities that complement federal laws related to offshore wind development. This program, administered by the California Energy Commission (CEC), awards funding to public and private entities, including state agencies, tribal entities, local governmental agencies, research institutions, and nonprofit entities, through a variety of mechanisms, including grants. AB 209 also established a new fund, the Voluntary Offshore Wind and Coastal Resources Protection Fund, to accept donations from private and federal sources.

Building upon these efforts, in 2023, AB 1373 (Garcia) designated the Department of Water Resources as a centralized procurement entity

to, in part, help reduce risk and facilitate offshore wind development in California.

The CEC's Offshore Wind Strategic Plan recommends that the state should prioritize community capacity building opportunities in working toward achieving the state's offshore wind planning goals. Communities and tribes located close to offshore wind impacts, in particular, have a vested interest in decision-making opportunities during the offshore wind development process.

PROBLEM

Frontline communities that are located closest to offshore wind development bear the brunt of the economic and societal costs of the development. However, despite the fact that these communities are often the most impacted, they are also the least equipped to reap the benefits of such large-scale energy projects.

Unfortunately, funding limitations create barriers for tribes and local communities to engage in a meaningful way. However, with the appropriate resources, these communities can be integral to decision-making through local engagement, public workshops, and technical assistance.

With offshore wind lessees developing Native American Tribes Communications Plans and participating in other local engagement, it is critically important that these communities have the capacity to attend workshops and meetings, respond to technical requests, and participate in renewable energy infrastructure's decision making processes. Engaging in this process can lead to strong community support for projects and community benefits as the state and federal government move closer to a clean energy transition.

SOLUTION

AB 2537 will establish the Local and Tribal Communities Offshore Wind Capacity Building Fund to enhance the ability of local communities and tribes to actively participate in the offshore wind development process, including project planning and development. The Fund will be a part of the Voluntary Offshore Wind and Coastal Resources Protection Program, which can be funded by voluntary private donations and by federal reallocation or revenue sharing, such as through the Reinvesting in Shoreline Economies and Ecosystems Act of 2023, also known as the RISEE Act.

AB 2537 will also update the renewable energy central procurement mechanism to include allocations to the Program as a solicitation criteria to be considered as part of the procurement process. Together, these changes will ensure that frontline communities are able to engage in offshore wind development in a meaningful way.

SUPPORT

Brightline Defense (*sponsor*)
Natural Resources Defense Council
Environmental Information Protection Center
Peninsula Community Collaborative
Redwood Community Action Agency
Elected Officials to Protect America

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