

Assembly Bill 2076

Extreme Heat and Community Resilience Program

Assemblywoman Luz Rivas

SUMMARY

Year after year, our state faces record-breaking heat waves that have left local governments to grapple with how best to protect residents from these life-threatening weather events. As one of the gravest hazards resulting from climate change, extreme heat causes more emergency room visits and deaths annually than any other weather-related disaster in the nation.

AB 2076 would establish the Extreme Heat and Community Resilience Program, coordinating the activities of the state and incentivize the development of local comprehensive heat action plans to protect communities from the dangers of extreme heat.

BACKGROUND

The California Energy Commission anticipates that by 2050, the state will experience an average of 40 to 55 extreme heat days per year. Research from the [Scripps Institute of Oceanography](#) at UC San Diego anticipates that the statewide annual median temperature will nearly triple between 2025 and 2050, from 1.9° to 4.6°, respectively. By 2025, the rise in temperature will translate to roughly 2,100 to 4,300 deaths and by 2050, 6,700 to 11,300 deaths.

Compounding these grim statistics the [Los Angeles Times](#) recently reported and identified a historic undercount of heat-related fatalities by the state. Their projections say heat-related fatalities in the past decade were six times worst.

Extreme heat is not just a public health threat. Higher temperatures tend to have a cascading effect leading to more intense wildfires, rolling power outages, damage to critical infrastructure, and increased air pollution. These impacts disproportionately harm low-income families, people of color, agricultural workers, people with preexisting health conditions, and other vulnerable populations in both urban and rural parts of the state.

The “Urban Heat Island” effect amplifies heating in urban areas both large and small where denser concentrations of pavement, buildings and other materials retain heat and slowly dissipate it at night. Vulnerable, low-income, and disadvantaged communities bear the brunt of this effect because they lack access to green space, have poorly weatherized homes and have little to no use for cooling centers.

PROBLEM

Extreme heat is still unrecognized as a major threat to the state. Efforts by the administration to plan for the equitable distribution of last year’s \$800 million budget allocation are on-going. When it comes to extreme heat, the state lacks focus, accountability, cross-agency collaboration, and clarity.

A recent study from the [UCLA Luskin Institute](#) evaluating the state’s program on extreme heat describes the current lack of coordination in the state’s effort as having, “No centrally responsible authority to provide technical assistance, strategic funding, or coordination to sister agencies to address the issue of heat.”

SOLUTION

AB 2076 will create a program that will be a holistic all of government approach to address all of the following:

- Creates incentives for local comprehensive heat action plans and establishes a competitive grant process that local entities can access to implement measures to reduce extreme heat including community resilience centers, urban forestry, cool streets, and cool roofs along with expanded planning tools,
- Establishes a Chief Heat Officer in California (Miami-Dade County Florida, Athens Greece, Freetown Liberia, Phoenix Arizona all have Chief Heat Officers),
- Creates an Extreme Heat Advisory Council and Interagency Heat Task Force under the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research. OPR will administer the Extreme Heat and Community Resilience Program.
- Establishes the Extreme Heat Hospitalization and Death Reporting System to understand where extreme heat deaths and illnesses are occurring.

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