

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 2154

Introduced by Assembly Member Brownley

February 20, 2008

An act relating to emergency services.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2154, as introduced, Brownley. Emergency services: fire engines.

Existing law, the California Emergency Services Act, establishes the Office of Emergency Services within the Governor's office. Under the State Assistance for Fire Equipment Act, the office is authorized to acquire new or used firefighting apparatus and equipment and to resell it to local agencies providing fire suppression services.

This bill would make findings and declarations by the Legislature regarding the state's need to increase its existing fire engine fleet, and would express the Legislature's intent to create and fund an expenditure plan for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to replace, augment, and upgrade its fire engine fleet.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: no.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the
2 following:

3 (a) Over 50 years ago, the federal government established a
4 program to match state and local funds for the purchase of fire and
5 rescue apparatus and equipment. In doing so, the federal
6 government recognized that no single fire department could afford

1 to purchase and maintain sufficient fire and rescue apparatus to
2 combat a major disaster or war-caused conflagration.

3 (b) In 1953 and 1954, the state, through the Governor's Office
4 of Emergency Services (OES), implemented the recommendations
5 of the Governor's Fire Advisory Committee and, using federal
6 matching funds, purchased 100 fire engines, and assigned them,
7 by written agreement, to local governments throughout the state.

8 (c) For five decades, local government assignees have been
9 permitted to use the OES fire engine fleet for mutual aid response,
10 local multiple alarm fires, temporary replacement for out-of-service
11 fire apparatus, firefighter training activities, and other local
12 governmental needs. Each assignee is required to dispatch the OES
13 fire engines with the requisite personnel to any emergency in
14 accordance with provisions of the Master Mutual Aid Agreement.

15 (d) In the aftermath of the 2003 southern California firestorm,
16 a bipartisan 34-member Blue Ribbon Fire Commission was
17 established to examine the devastating effects of the fires in an
18 effort to prevent similar devastation of life and property in the
19 future.

20 (e) The final report of the Blue Ribbon Fire Commission
21 revealed that while state and local fire agencies reported having
22 available personnel capable of responding to fires, most lacked
23 the additional equipment required for such a response. To this end,
24 the commission recommended that the state develop, among other
25 things, a program to fund the acquisition of 150 additional OES
26 fire engines. The commission also recommended that the state
27 begin replacing and diversifying the aging fire engine fleet
28 maintained by the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

29 (f) In 2007, amidst yet another 100-year firestorm in southern
30 California, only 19 of the 150 OES fire engines recommended for
31 purchase by the commission had actually been purchased. While
32 our state's firefighting force stood ready and able to attack the
33 fires, state and local governments lacked the equipment required
34 to dispatch personnel who might have otherwise reduced the
35 devastating impact of the fires by deploying a more rapid and
36 powerful response.

37 (g) Given the destruction caused by the 2003 and 2007 southern
38 California fires, it is clear, now more than ever, that assistance is
39 needed to enable OES to purchase additional engines for state and
40 local emergency response use.

1 (h) It is in the public's interest for the state to implement the
2 recommendation made by the commission and in doing so, rapidly
3 build upon its existing fire engine fleet for use in mitigating the
4 effects of all forms of disasters, including terrorist acts, and major
5 fires, floods, and earthquakes.

6 SEC. 2. It is the intent of the Legislature to create and fund a
7 multiyear expenditure plan and to direct the Department of Forestry
8 and Fire Protection to continue with a cycle to replace, augment,
9 and upgrade the aging fire engine fleet that it maintains.

O