



# Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia, 36<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

## AB 2757 – Southeast California Economic Region

Updated 3/22/24

### **BACKGROUND**

The Imperial, Eastern Coachella, and Palo Verde Valleys face many of the same economic/societal challenges. California’s “Lithium Valley” located around these areas contains one of the largest and most environmentally sustainable lithium reserves in the world. By creating an economic zone around “Lithium Valley”, there is a great opportunity to encourage economic development around these areas.

AB 1657 (E. Garcia 2020), established the Lithium Valley Commission comprised of 14 members representing state agencies, private industry, local government and environmental groups, as well as, government appointees. This commission was tasked with exploring opportunities and challenges in developing the state’s lithium industry and providing a report on its findings to the legislature. One of the recommendations being the creation of the Southeast California Economic Region to advance economic expansion around California’s Lithium Valley.

### **ISSUE**

Economic zones in the United States promote economic development in distressed areas in the country.

Currently, the Imperial Valley is grouped with San Diego as the Southern Border Region while the Eastern Coachella and Palo Verde Valleys are grouped together with the Inland Empire as part of the greater Southern California Region. Such division dilutes the interests and opportunities for constituents in the Imperial, Eastern Coachella, and Palo Verde Valleys. These areas face hardships that are more alike than their current economic zone designations such as:

- Environmental and economic implications due to Salton Sea degradation.
- Transportation barriers.

- Unemployment rates higher than the state average.
- Median income rates lower than the state average.
- Lack of infrastructure.
- Decreased local revenue.

### **BILL SUMMARY**

This bill would:

- establish the Southeast California Economic Region, which will facilitate collaboration with state, federal, regional, and local organizations, entities, and governments on issues of mutual interest that advance the economy and quality of life of residents and businesses.
- capture the full benefits of the Lithium Valley renewable energy development hub, the southeastern desert valleys need a definitive economic development designation that supports efficient resource attraction and fosters economic relationships between business, labor, and community.
- help the region compete for federal, state, and local funding and investments.

### **For More Information:**

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## Heber Public Utility District

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September 19, 2024

The Honorable Gavin Newsom  
Governor, State of California  
1021 O Street, Suite 9000  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 2757 (Garcia, Padilla) – Southeast California Economic Region – Request for Signature**

Dear Governor Newsom,

On behalf of the Heber Public utility District, I write to urge your signature for Assembly Bill 2757, by Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia and Senator Steve Padilla, which would establish the Southeast California Economic Region. Doing so will help create a districtwide measure aligning state and federal programs to benefit communities impacted by lithium and other mineral extraction and clean energy development.

This vital legislative proposal has made it through the State Legislature with bipartisan support and received no opposition. AB 2757 also allows for regional collaboration to create a strategic plan for economic development for the benefit of the Salton Sea region as recommended by the California Blue-Ribbon Commission on Lithium Extraction.

By signing AB 2757, it will enhance the region's economic development toolbox by authorizing the Salton Sea Region to more authentically align communities of interest and attract public and private capital more effectively. Most importantly, enacting this measure will uplift the interests, voices, and opportunities of our people and businesses that comprise the Imperial and Coachella Valleys.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge your signature on AB 2757.

Sincerely,

Delfino Matus  
Board President  
Heber Public Utility District