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California State Senate

SENATOR
STEPHEN C. PADILLA
EIGHTEENTH SENATE DISTRICT



COMMITTEES
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HEALTH
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PRIVACY, DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES,
& CONSUMER PROTECTION

SB 675 – Imperial County Air Pollution Control District

The Salton Sea is located in Riverside and Imperial County and is a growing ecological and public health crisis. The sea is a terminal lake with no outlet to the ocean, it has no natural inflows and the only way water can depart is through evaporation, leaving behind dust, salt, and other particles. Due to agricultural runoff, the lakebed is filled with toxins such as pesticides, lead, DDT, and chromium which become exposed to the air as the lake shrinks, causing dangerous dust storms.

In the American Lung Association's recent air quality scorecard, Imperial County received an "F" grade and ranked 14th in the nation for ozone pollution and was one of twenty counties in the nation to receive an "F" grade in all three measures of pollution: ozone, short-term particle pollution, and year-round particle pollution. In addition to this, Imperial County has consistently records some of the highest asthma emergency department visits and hospitalization rates in the state due to the poor air quality in the district. Given these risks and the immense health consequences posed by unhealthy air quality, in addition to the growing issue of the Salton Sea's toxic lakebed, cities and public members should have a seat at the table. In their new role, they will be able to offer their diverse perspectives and expertise to vital air quality decisions that directly impact their residents.

Air district boards were established to help jurisdictions meet federal, state, and local air quality regulations and goals. Air districts are responsible for controlling emissions, ensuring that pollution sources are compliant with regulations, permitting facilities, addressing complaints, and developing technology and research. There are a total of 35 air districts across the state that vary from smaller, rural single county boards to larger, multiregional districts. Larger county air district boards typically include members of the board of supervisors and representatives from local cities. The Imperial County Air Pollution Control District represents over 180,000 people across 7 incorporated cities. Within their jurisdiction, there are various sources of air pollution including, agricultural operations, diesel fumes, the shrinking Salton Sea, and other sources such as automobile exhaust. The county also experiences high levels of particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM 10). However, unlike other air districts that oversee a single county, the composition of the Board specifically excludes local cities and community members from having a seat on the Board (AB 75 (Hauser), Chapter 961, Statutes of 1993). Instead, the Board is entirely made up of members of the Imperial County Board of Supervisors, leaving out the perspectives and insight into local air pollution sources that cities and stakeholders could provide. Air Pollution Control Boards are critical to controlling emissions, regulating facilities, and researching new technologies that will bring their districts closer to attaining their air quality goals. Despite having annual operating costs of \$23 million and a staff of 10-15 dedicated public servants, there are many examples of how the Board could be much more proactive in protecting our air or providing information to the impacted communities about pollution sources. There is a lack of information on who are the biggest polluters in the County, resulting in a lack of transparency and accountability on the Board's enforcement actions.

SB 675 will increase the diversity on the Imperial County Air Pollution Control District governing board by including the voices of several cities and subject-matter experts in the governance of the Board. The Board be made up of the following members:

- 1 representative from the Imperial County Board of Supervisors
- 1 City Council representative from each of the five County supervisorial districts (no city shall have more than 2 members)
- 4 public members appointed by the public agencies representatives with the following backgrounds:
 - o A physician or public health professional
 - o A representative of an environmental justice organization
 - o A representative with a background in labor with an understanding of worker health and safety issues
 - o A representative with a background in agricultural practices

SB 675 will also require the newly created ICAPCD to post data to its website related to agendas, permit information, applications to construct/operate, enforcement actions, notices of violation/notices to comply, Air Toxics “Hot Spots”, and ICAPCD budget information. These new posting requirements will ensure that the public in Imperial County are fully informed related to the air quality in their community.

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Support

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Heber Public Utility District

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June 18, 2026

Assemblymember Isaac Bryan
Assembly Natural Resources
1020 N Street, Room 164
Sacramento, CA 85814

Re: Senate Bill 675: Imperial County Air Pollution Control District

Dear Assemblymember Bryan,

On behalf the Heber Public Utility District, I am pleased to offer our strong support of SB 675 which would increase the diversity of the Imperial County Air Pollution Control District (ICAPCD) by requiring the addition of representatives from city council representatives and public members with backgrounds in public health, environmental justice, labor, and agriculture.

The residents of Imperial Valley deal with some of the worst air quality in the country. The evaporating Salton Sea exposes the toxic lakebed which contains pesticides, lead, DDT, and chromium, causing dangerous dust storms.

In the American Lung Association's recent air quality scorecard, Imperial County received an "F" grade and ranked 14th in the nation for ozone pollution and was one of twenty counties in the nation to receive an "F" grade in all three measures of pollution: ozone, short-term particle pollution, and year-round particle pollution. In addition to this, Imperial County has consistently records some of the highest asthma emergency department visits and hospitalization rates in the state due to the poor air quality in the district. Information about the sources of pollution is difficult and residents are disconnected from the oversight of pollution sources. Given these risks and the immense health consequences posed by unhealthy air quality, in addition to the growing issue of the Salton Sea's toxic lakebed, cities and public members should have a seat at the table. In their new role, they will be able to offer their diverse perspectives and expertise to vital air quality decisions that directly impact their residents.

SB 675 would restructure the governing board of the ICAPCD from the current makeup of 5 county supervisors and replace it with 10 board members representing the county, cities, and community members. The bill would also require the ICAPCD to post data to its website on current permits, pending applications, and enforcement actions.

For these reasons, SB 675 (Padilla) would further the Heber Public Utility District's goal of providing outstanding public services and innovative leadership to enhance the Heber community, and we are proud to support SB 887 (Padilla)/and encourage your "aye" vote when it is heard in your committee.

Best regards,

Pompeyo Tabarez,
Board President
Heber Public Utility District