

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

SUPERVISORS

Phillip Peters District 1
Zack Scrivner District 2
Jeff Flores District 3
David Couch District 4
Leticia Perez District 5



KATHLEEN KRAUSE
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
Kern County Administrative Center
1115 Truxtun Avenue, 5th Floor
Bakersfield, CA 93301
Telephone (661) 868-3585
TTY Relay (800) 735-2929

July 2, 2024

The Honorable Benjamin Allen
Chair, Senate Environmental Quality Committee
1021 O Street, Room 3230
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 3238 (Garcia), CEQA exemption for specified electrical infrastructure construction, expansion, modification, and upgrade – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Allen,

I am writing on behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors to express our support for AB 3238 (Garcia), which would streamline and exempt environmental review, planning, and permitting for electrical infrastructure projects, including creating a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) exemption for right-of-way expansions that will be used for transmission projects.

In 2021, a joint agency report estimated that the state may need to add 175 gigawatts of new renewable or zero-carbon electrical generation capacity to the electrical grid by 2045 to achieve the goal of serving 100 percent of retail sales of electricity from renewable or zero-carbon sources. The anticipated zero-carbon capacity requirement represents an increase of nearly three times the electrical grid's current total generation capacity across all resource types. The California Independent System Operator (CAISO), in its 20-year Transmission Outlook from January 2022, estimated that \$30.5 billion may need to be invested in new transmission capacity by 2040 in order to support the increase in electrical demand.

Currently, new transmission lines require completion of many time-consuming steps before they come online and deliver electricity, including rights-of-way, obtaining land use and environmental permits, and constructing the transmission lines and related infrastructure. Major new transmission lines can take more than a decade to transition from their initial planning stage to operation.

The need for this legislation has been made evident by the significant delays in connecting construction projects to the existing power grid, a problem that is emerging at hundreds of projects across California. The primary concern is that long delayed or abandoned projects will harm local commerce and stymie efforts to attract and retain new businesses.

Similarly, interconnection delays can become a significant barrier to the development of renewable energy projects in California, leading to significant costs for project developers and delays in achieving the state's renewable energy goals. Many projects are facing long wait times for interconnection studies, leading to uncertainty in project timelines and increased costs.

The most important step the legislature can take to bring transmission infrastructure online faster is to shorten the complex and lengthy permitting and environmental review processes. AB 3238 makes logical and beneficial changes to the CPUC's permitting and environmental review processes, which have not been significantly revised since 1995. In addition, the bill includes other beneficial measures to prudently expedite the CEQA and agency review processes.

For these reasons, the Kern County Board of Supervisors is pleased to support this legislation and respectfully requests that you vote **YES on AB 3238**.

Sincerely,



David Couch, Chairman
Kern County Board of Supervisors

CC: Honorable Members, Senate Appropriations Committee
Honorable Members, Kern Legislative Delegation
Kern County Planning and Natural Resources Department
Shaw Yoder Antwih Schmelzer & Lange