

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 1309

Introduced by Assembly Member Flora

February 21, 2025

An act to add Section 19827.4 to, the Government Code, relating to state employees.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1309, as introduced, Flora. State employees: compensation: firefighters.

Existing law provides that in order for the state to recruit skilled firefighters for the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, it is the policy of the state to consider prevailing salaries and benefits prior to making salary recommendations. Existing law requires the Department of Human Resources, in order to provide comparability in pay, to take into consideration the salary and benefits of other jurisdictions employing 75 or more full-time firefighters who work in California.

This bill would require the state to pay firefighters who are rank-and-file members of State Bargaining Unit 8, employed by the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, within 15% of the average salary for corresponding ranks in 20 listed California fire departments. The bill would require the state and the exclusive representative for State Bargaining Unit 8 to jointly survey annually and calculate the estimated average salaries for those fire departments. The bill would also require the Department of Human Resources, on or before January 1, 2027, to conduct and report to the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection a cursory survey on the salaries and benefits for the prior year of each of the fire chiefs for 5 listed California fire departments.

The bill would provide that when determining compensation for uniformed classifications of the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, it is the policy of the state to consider the salary of corresponding ranks within the comparable jurisdictions listed, as well as other factors, including internal comparisons. The bill would require any salary increase for firefighters under these provisions to be implemented through a memorandum of understanding, in accordance with specified procedures governing collective bargaining agreements. The bill would include legislative findings and declarations related to its provisions.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.
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) Historic fires of the past decade have resulted in well over
4 100 deaths, caused billions of dollars in damage, destroyed entire
5 communities, and placed overworked firefighters at risk.

6 (b) Firefighters with the Department of Forestry and Fire
7 Protection (CAL-FIRE) have the most diverse work responsibilities
8 of any firefighters, which includes fire of all types, floods,
9 earthquakes, and all natural disasters.

10 (c) Climate change is creating an environment where wildfires
11 burn with greater ferocity and that trend is systemic.

12 (d) The mental health of CAL-FIRE firefighters is placed at risk
13 by the extremely long hours working under extreme duress,
14 sometimes for a month on duty without a day off.

15 (e) The physical risk of working long hours at point zero at these
16 fires that burn for weeks and send dangerous particulates into the
17 air causes immediate and long-term physical and mental health
18 risks.

19 SEC. 2. Section 19827.4 is added to the Government Code, to
20 read:

21 19827.4. (a) Notwithstanding any other law, in order to recruit
22 and retain the highest qualified and skilled firefighters for the
23 Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, the state shall pay
24 firefighters who are rank-and-file members of State Bargaining
25 Unit 8 within 15 percent of the average of the salary for

1 corresponding ranks in the 20 California fire departments, agreed
2 to by the exclusive bargaining representative for Bargaining Unit
3 8 and the Department of Human Resources in 2017, as follows:

- 4 (1) The City of Bakersfield.
- 5 (2) The City of Chula Vista.
- 6 (3) The City of Corona.
- 7 (4) The City of Escondido.
- 8 (5) The City of Fullerton.
- 9 (6) The City of Hayward.
- 10 (7) Livermore-Pleasanton Fire Department.
- 11 (8) The County of Los Angeles.
- 12 (9) The City of Milpitas.
- 13 (10) Novato Fire District.
- 14 (11) The City of Ontario.
- 15 (12) The City of Oxnard.
- 16 (13) The City of Rialto.
- 17 (14) The City of Roseville.
- 18 (15) The County of San Bernardino.
- 19 (16) The City of San Mateo.
- 20 (17) The City of Santa Monica.
- 21 (18) The City of Stockton.
- 22 (19) The City of Torrance.
- 23 (20) The County of Ventura.

24 (b) (1) The state and the exclusive representative for State
25 Bargaining Unit 8 shall jointly survey annually and calculate the
26 estimated average salaries of the departments listed in paragraphs
27 (1) to (20), inclusive, of subdivision (a), based on the projected
28 average total salary for those departments as of July 1 of the year
29 in which the survey is conducted.

30 (2) In addition to paragraph (1), the department shall, on or
31 before January 1, 2027, conduct and report to the Department of
32 Forestry and Fire Protection a cursory survey on the salaries and
33 benefits for the prior year of each of the fire chiefs for the following
34 five California fire departments:

- 35 (A) The City of Fresno.
- 36 (B) The County of Los Angeles.
- 37 (C) The County of San Bernardino.
- 38 (D) The City of San Diego.
- 39 (E) The City and County of San Francisco.

1 (c) When determining compensation for uniformed
2 classifications of the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection,
3 it is the policy of the state to consider the salary of corresponding
4 ranks within the comparable jurisdictions listed in paragraphs (1)
5 to (20) of subdivision (a), inclusive, as well as other factors,
6 including internal comparisons.

7 (d) Any increase in salary for firefighters who are members of
8 State Bargaining Unit 8 resulting from this section shall be
9 implemented through a memorandum of understanding negotiated
10 pursuant to the Ralph C. Dills Act (Chapter 10.3 (commencing
11 with Section 3512) of Division 4 of Title 1).

12 (e) If the provisions of this section are in conflict with the
13 provisions of a memorandum of understanding reached pursuant
14 to Section 3517.5, the memorandum of understanding shall be
15 controlling without further legislative action, except that if the
16 provisions of a memorandum of understanding require the
17 expenditure of funds, the provision shall not become effective
18 unless approved by the Legislature and the annual Budget Act.