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SB-1156 Groundwater sustainability agencies: conflicts of interest: financial interest disclosures. (2023-2024)

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Senate Bill No. 1156

CHAPTER 458

An act to add Section 87200.5 to the Government Code, relating to the Political Reform Act of 1974.

[Approved by Governor September 22, 2024. Filed with Secretary of State September 22, 2024.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 1156, Hurtado. Groundwater sustainability agencies: conflicts of interest: financial interest disclosures.

Existing law, the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, requires all groundwater basins designated as high- or medium-priority basins by the Department of Water Resources to be managed under a groundwater sustainability plan or coordinated groundwater sustainability plans, except as specified. Existing law requires a groundwater sustainability plan to be developed and implemented for each medium- or high-priority basin by a groundwater sustainability agency. Existing law authorizes any local agency or combination of local agencies overlying a groundwater basin to decide to become a groundwater sustainability agency for that basin, as provided.

The Political Reform Act of 1974 prohibits a public official from making, participating in making, or attempting to use their official position to influence a governmental decision in which they know or have reason to know that they have a financial interest, as defined. The act requires specified public officials, including elected state officers, judges and court commissioners, members of certain boards and commissions, other state and local public officials, and candidates for these positions to file statements of economic interests, annually and at other specified times, that disclose their investments, interests in real property, income, and business positions. The Fair Political Practices Commission is the filing officer for such statements filed by statewide elected officers and candidates and other specified public officials.

This bill would require members of the board of directors and the executive, as defined, of a groundwater sustainability agency to file statements of economic interests, according to the filing requirements described above, with the Fair Political Practices Commission using the Commission's online system for filing statements of economic interests.

Existing law makes a knowing or willful violation of the Political Reform Act of 1974 a misdemeanor and subjects offenders to criminal penalties. By expanding the scope of an existing crime, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

The Political Reform Act of 1974, an initiative measure, provides that the Legislature may amend the act to further the act's purposes upon a $\frac{2}{3}$ vote of each house of the Legislature and compliance with specified procedural requirements.

This bill would declare that it furthers the purposes of the act.

Vote: 2/3 Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: yes

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares it is essential to establish mechanisms that promote transparency, prevent conflicts of interest, and ensure accountability within groundwater sustainability agencies to safeguard the sustainable management of groundwater resources.

SEC. 2. Section 87200.5 is added to the Government Code, to read:

87200.5. (a) Members of the board of directors and the executive of a groundwater sustainability agency shall file statements of economic interests in accordance with this article with the Commission using the Commission's online system for filing statements of economic interests.

(b) For purposes of this section, "executive" means the executive director, general manager, or other equivalent position of the groundwater sustainability agency.

SEC. 3. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because the only costs that may be incurred by a local agency or school district will be incurred because this act creates a new crime or infraction, eliminates a crime or infraction, or changes the penalty for a crime or infraction, within the meaning of Section 17556 of the Government Code, or changes the definition of a crime within the meaning of Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution.

SEC. 4. The Legislature finds and declares that this act furthers the purposes of the Political Reform Act of 1974 within the meaning of subdivision (a) of Section 81012 of the Government Code.