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AB-571 California Environmental Quality Act: exemption: Gypsum Canyon Veterans Cemetery. (2025-2026)

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Assembly Bill No. 571

CHAPTER 158

An act to add and repeal Section 21080.62 of the Public Resources Code, relating to environmental quality, and declaring the urgency thereof, to take effect immediately.

[Approved by Governor October 01, 2025. Filed with Secretary of State October 01, 2025.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 571, Quirk-Silva. California Environmental Quality Act: exemption: Gypsum Canyon Veterans Cemetery.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires a lead agency, as defined, to prepare, or cause to be prepared, and certify the completion of an environmental impact report on a project that it proposes to carry out or approve that may have a significant effect on the environment or to adopt a negative declaration if it finds that the project will not have that effect. CEQA also requires a lead agency to prepare a mitigated negative declaration for a project that may have a significant effect on the environment if revisions in the project would avoid or mitigate that effect and there is no substantial evidence that the project, as revised, would have a significant effect on the environment.

CEQA exempts from its requirements various projects, including, but not limited to, housing projects that meet certain requirements and activities and approvals related to certain prison facilities.

This bill would exempt from the requirements of CEQA any activity or approval necessary for the completion of the Gypsum Canyon Veterans Cemetery in the County of Orange if specified conditions are met. To the extent that a local agency would be required to determine whether an activity or approval qualifies for this exemption, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program. The bill would repeal this provision on January 1, 2030.

This bill would make legislative findings and declarations as to the necessity of a special statute for the Gypsum Canyon Veterans Cemetery in the County of Orange.

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.

This bill would declare that it is to take effect immediately as an urgency statute.

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

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

SECTION 1. (a) The Legislature finds and declares the following:

(1) The County of Orange has been identified as the state's largest county without a veterans cemetery, despite the fact that the County of Orange is home to United States Army, Navy, and Marine Corps bases and more than 90,000 veterans.

(2) Since 2014, the Legislature has enacted multiple measures related to the Southern California Veterans Cemetery, underscoring the state's commitment to providing a final resting place for veterans in the County of Orange.

(3) The County of Orange and all 34 cities in the county have formally adopted resolutions in support of developing a Southern California Veterans Cemetery at Gypsum Canyon. Additionally, the Veterans Alliance of Orange County, a coalition representing numerous veterans organizations, has officially endorsed the project.

(4) In recognition of the urgent need for a veterans and public cemetery, the County of Orange deeded 200 acres of publicly owned land to the Orange County Cemetery District for the construction of a veterans cemetery and an adjacent public cemetery.

(5) The Gypsum Canyon site has undergone extensive environmental review, including a planning-level environmental impact report (EIR), certified in 2005. In 2024, the Anaheim City Council unanimously approved an EIR addendum for the cemetery project, confirming that the proposed development is within the scope of the previously certified EIR.

(6) The proposed cemetery represents a less intensive land use than the uses contemplated under the prior EIR. As such, additional review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (Division 13 (commencing with Section 21000) of the Public Resources Code) is not necessary.

(7) The Orange County Board of Supervisors, the Orange County Cemetery District, and the Department of Veterans Affairs have collaborated to advance the cemetery project while evaluating shared cost options to maximize efficiency in development and operations.

(8) The proposed Gypsum Canyon Veterans Cemetery project provides the specific public benefit of honoring military veterans.

(b) It is, therefore, the intent of the Legislature in enacting this measure to remove barriers that may delay the construction of the Gypsum Canyon Cemetery and to facilitate the timely establishment of this long overdue cemetery for County of Orange veterans, first responders, allied veterans, and their families.

SEC. 2. Section 21080.62 is added to the Public Resources Code, to read:

21080.62. (a) This division does not apply to any activity or approval necessary for the completion of the public and state veterans cemetery in Gypsum Canyon in the County of Orange, known as the Gypsum Canyon Veterans Cemetery if both of the following conditions are met:

(1) The public and state veterans cemetery in Gypsum Canyon is a less intensive land use than the project analyzed in the 2005 certified environmental impact report Mountain Park Specific Plan Amendment.

(2) The Gypsum Canyon Cemetery Project Development Project No. 2020-00204 Addendum to the 2005 Certified Environmental Impact Report No. 331 analyzed the impacts of the public and state veterans cemetery in Gypsum Canyon.

(b) This section shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2030, and as of that date is repealed.

SEC. 3. The Legislature finds and declares that a special statute is necessary and that a general statute cannot be made applicable within the meaning of Section 16 of Article IV of the California Constitution because the County of Orange, the state's largest county without a veterans cemetery, requires specific legislative action to establish the Gypsum Canyon Veterans Cemetery and provide a final resting place for its veterans.

SEC. 4. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because a local agency or school district has the authority to levy service charges, fees, or assessments sufficient to pay for the program or level of service mandated by this act, within the meaning of Section 17556 of the Government Code.

SEC. 5. This act is an urgency statute necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety within the meaning of Article IV of the California Constitution and shall go into immediate effect. The facts constituting the necessity are:

The County of Orange is the largest county in the state without a veterans cemetery and requires immediate legislative action to facilitate the construction of the Gypsum Canyon Veterans Cemetery. In order to ensure the honorable and respectful treatment of veterans in the County of Orange in the county they called home, it is necessary that this act take effect immediately.