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AB-685 Los Angeles and Ventura Wildfire Small Business Recovery Act. (2025-2026)

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CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2025–2026 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

NO. 685

Introduced by Assembly Member Solache

February 14, 2025

An act to add and repeal Article 7.5 (commencing with Section 12100.70) of Chapter 1.6 of Part 2 of Division 3 of Title 2 of the Government Code, relating to economic recovery, making an appropriation therefor, and declaring the urgency thereof, to take effect immediately.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 685, as introduced, Solache. Los Angeles and Ventura Wildfire Small Business Recovery Act.

Existing law establishes the Office of Small Business Advocate (OSBA) within the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development, also known as GO-Biz, to advocate for causes of small business and to provide small businesses with the information they need to survive in the marketplace. Existing law also establishes the California Small Business Technical Assistance Program (SB-TAP) within OSBA, under the direct authority of the Small Business Advocate, for the purpose of assisting small businesses through free or low-cost one-on-one consulting and low-cost training by entering into grant agreements with one or more small business technical assistance centers. Under existing law, OSBA administers the Capital Infusion Program (CIP) pursuant to the SB-TAP, as specified.

This bill would establish the Los Angeles and Ventura Wildfire Small Business Recovery Act to provide assistance to small businesses directly impacted by the January 2025 wildfires in the Counties of Los Angeles and Ventura. For this purpose, the bill would appropriate \$50,000,000 from the General Fund to the Los Angeles and Ventura Wildfire Small Business Recovery Fund, which the bill would create in the State Treasury. The bill would require OSBA to administer the fund and to allocate moneys in the fund to both the CIP and the SB-TAP. The bill would also require OSBA to establish a separate program to provide relief for employees of small businesses directly impacted by those wildfires. The bill would require Go-Biz to submit a report to the Legislature detailing the allocation and expenditure of funds pursuant to these provisions and would repeal the act on January 1, 2031.

The bill would make legislative findings and declarations as to the necessity of a special statute for the Counties of Los Angeles and Ventura.

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

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

SECTION 1. Article 7.5 (commencing with Section 12100.70) is added to Chapter 1.6 of Part 2 of Division 3 of Title 2 of the Government Code, to read:

Article 7.5. Los Angeles and Ventura Wildfire Small Business Recovery Act

12100.70. This article shall be known, and may be cited, as the Los Angeles and Ventura Wildfire Small Business Recovery Act.

12100.71. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) The January 2025 wildfires in the Counties of Los Angeles and Ventura have caused significant economic harm to small businesses, disrupting operations, reducing revenues, and limiting access to capital for recovery.

(b) The Capital Infusion Program (CIP) was created for the purpose of providing small businesses with the necessary resources to pursue strategic initiatives and is administered by the Office of Small Business Advocate within the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz). The CIP has been instrumental in supporting small businesses by providing technical assistance regarding access to capital.

(c) Additional funding is necessary to enhance the capacity of the CIP to provide targeted support for small businesses directly affected by the wildfires in the Counties of Los Angeles and Ventura.

(d) The Small Business Technical Assistance Program (SB-TAP), which is under the direct authority of the Small Business Advocate, is another critical resource for small businesses, providing essential wraparound technical assistance to support recovery and resilience.

12100.72. (a) The sum of fifty million dollars (\$50,000,000) is hereby appropriated from the General Fund to the Los Angeles and Ventura Wildfire Small Business Recovery Fund, which is hereby created within the State Treasury. The Office of Small Business Advocate shall administer the fund and shall allocate moneys within the fund to both the CIP and the SB-TAP.

(b) Moneys within the fund shall be used solely for the purpose of providing assistance to small businesses directly impacted by the January 2025 wildfires in the Counties of Los Angeles and Ventura.

12100.73. The Office of Small Business Advocate shall establish a separate program to provide relief for employees of small businesses directly impacted by the January 2025 wildfires in the Counties of Los Angeles and Ventura.

12100.74. (a) GO-Biz shall submit a report to the Legislature detailing the allocation and expenditure of funds pursuant to this article.

(b) The report shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following:

(1) The number of businesses assisted.

(2) The types of assistance provided.

(3) An assessment of the impact on business recovery.

(c) The report shall also include a detailed accounting of the allocation and impact of the funds appropriated to the SB-TAP and CIP.

(d) The report shall be submitted in compliance with Section 9795.

12100.75. This article shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2031, and as of that date is repealed.

SEC. 2. The provisions of this act are severable. If any provision of this act or its application is held invalid, that invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications that can be given effect without the invalid provision or application.

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 of the unique circumstances facing the Counties of Los Angeles and Ventura due to the extreme wildfires beginning in January 2025 that have resulted in the urgent need for the state to assist with economic recovery in those areas.

SEC. 4. 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 economic recovery of small businesses affected by the wildfires in the Counties of Los Angeles and Ventura is critical to the wellbeing of the people in these regions, and therefore it is necessary that this act take effect immediately.