

Bill targeting health and economic impacts of wildfire smoke advances

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Legislation sponsored by the California Farm Bureau that aims to improve the understanding of the health impacts of wildfire smoke and enhance the state's ability to mitigate these impacts through data-driven approaches has passed the California Senate with unanimous support. The bill moves on to the California Assembly.

Senate Bill 945, the Wildfire Smoke and Health Outcomes Data Act, authored by California Sen. Marie Alvarado-Gil, D-Jackson, seeks to establish a statewide integrated wildfire smoke and health data platform by July 1, 2026, to better understand the negative health impacts of wildfire smoke on California's population and evaluate the effectiveness of investments in forest health and wildfire mitigation.

Under SB 945, protocols will be developed for data sharing, documentation, quality control and the promotion of open-source platforms related to wildfire smoke and health data. Additionally, regularly updated data products will be created to track air pollution concentrations, population exposure to smoke and adverse health outcomes.

California Farm Bureau President Shannon Douglass weighed in on the significance of the bill, saying farm and ranch communities have been hit especially hard by smoke from unprecedented wildfire activity, which has caused adverse health outcomes.

“Exposure to wildfire smoke affects communities across the state but the problem is often more prevalent in rural areas, with negative health impacts felt by farmers, ranchers and farm employees working outdoors,” Douglass said. “To strengthen protections for communities, we’re proud to work with Sen. Alvarado-Gil and the bill’s wide coalition of supporters to pursue legislation that ensures policymakers and health providers understand these impacts completely and implement wildfire mitigation strategies.”

“Our state’s catastrophic wildfires are not just a threat to our homes and businesses; they endanger our livestock, public health, and, most importantly, human lives,” Sen. Alvarado-Gil said. “This crisis hits close to home, especially for outdoor workers who face greater health risks as a result of inhaling wildfire smoke.”

Sen. Alvarado-Gil added, “I am grateful to the Farm Bureau for bringing this essential legislation to my office, and I acknowledge the efforts of the California Council on Science and Technology and Blue Forest. Their work has shed light on the connections between forest management, wildfire smoke and human health. For legislators to make informed decisions, we need robust data to support our actions—this bill will provide just that.”

Sen. Alvarado-Gil represents the 4th Senate District including the counties of Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Inyo, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, Mono, Nevada, Placer, Stanislaus and Tuolumne.

The California Farm Bureau works to protect family farms and ranches on behalf of more than 26,000 members statewide and as part of a nationwide network of 5.8 million Farm Bureau members.