

AB 1588 (GLORIA/GRAY) DRINKING WATER AND WASTEWATER OPERATOR CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS

POSITION: The Chamber's Public Policy Sub-Committee on Defense, Veterans & Military Affairs on April 3, 2019 and Sub-Committee on Energy & Water voted to SUPPORT the bill on April 3, 2019. The Chamber's Public Policy Committee voted to SUPPORT the bill on April 9, 2019. The Chamber's Board of Directors voted to SUPPORT the bill on April 25, 2019.

RATIONALE: Creating a pathway for veterans to more easily enter the workforce remains a Chamber priority.

STATUS: AB 1588 was introduced by Assemblymember Todd Gloria and Assemblymember Adam Gray on February 22, 2019 and was re-referred to the Assembly Committee on Environmental Safety & Toxic Materials on April 3, 2019.

SUMMARY

AB 1588 creates a pathway for veterans to apply their skills and experience to a career in water and wastewater treatment that requires one to obtain state and industry-supplied certifications.

INDUSTRY/IES IMPACTED

Industries impacted by this bill include water and wastewater utilities, health, construction, and more.

SUPPORTERS

- Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA)
- California Water Association (CWA)
- Council of Water Utilities
- Eastern Municipal Water District
- Irvine Ranch Water District
- Oceanside Chamber of Commerce
- Otay Water District
- San Diego County Water Authority
- San Diego North Economic Development Council
- San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation
- San Diego Workforce Partnership
- South County Economic Development Council
- Sweetwater Authority
- Valley Center Municipal Water District

OPPONENTS

None known

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR

- Numerous water and wastewater professionals are retiring or are expected to retire very soon. This industry needs a talented workforce and veterans can meet this demand if this is the career path they choose.
- If a veteran has done similar work and obtained training and credentials while in the military, those credentials should be able to be applied to their civilian occupation.
- California should follow in the footsteps of Washington, Texas, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania and provide a pathway for veterans who wish to remain in the water and wastewater industry.

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION

A bill such as this shouldn't come from the state, rather, a national certification process should be established. There shouldn't be piecemeal regulations that differ from state to state.

MORE INFORMATION

Currently, an advisory assists the State Water Board in reviewing proposed regulations and in the certification process. AB 1588 would create an additional seat on that advisory committee for a veteran or active duty service member with experience in water or wastewater operations during their military service.

The San Diego County Water Authority and Otay Water District highlight that “water and wastewater treatment is an essential and well-established industry with an aging infrastructure and workforce. Replacement of critical infrastructure components, like 100-year-old pipes and pumps, while maintaining service to customers, is one of the greatest challenges in the industry today.”