



Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia, 56th Assembly District

AB 386 - Agricultural Working Poor Energy Efficient Housing Program

Summary

AB 386 will require the Department of Community Services and Development to develop and administer the Agricultural Working Poor Energy Efficient Housing Program in order to improve energy efficiency in farmworker-owned housing.

Background

Agriculture remains a huge part of the economy throughout many parts of California. In order to maintain this economy, between 500,000-800,000 individuals are employed in the industry. Yet these families often face tremendous obstacles from educational challenges for their children based on the growing season to overcrowding and aging housing facilities.

While at one time farmworker population was characterized by its mobility, today it has become much more stable and permanent in the agricultural areas of the State. Many farmworkers are located in rural hard to reach areas. Energy consumption in their homes is higher than average because of the larger number of individuals per household.

California's 800,000 low-income farmworkers cannot afford to reduce their reliance on carbon intensive energy sources. Without additional resources and assistance, it will be especially impossible for farmworkers, to make the expensive investments in retrofitting homes for increased energy efficiency, fuel-efficient cars and other low carbon infrastructure and/or technologies.

In a community like Mecca, CA often one can see five or six men living in one room, individuals choosing to sleep in their cars or sleep on the pavement because their cars get too hot even at night during the desert summers.

For example there are estimated to be over 100 mobile home parks in the Coachella Valley serving agricultural workers. Many of these parks have unreliable and unsafe electrical infrastructure that resulted in brownouts or created fire hazards and outdated water infrastructure resulting in a lack of hot water or leakages. Despite being smaller in nature, they can often still face high electricity and utility bills further exasperating economic hardships.

UC Riverside reported a study released in 2018 listing the poor mental and physical health in rural borderland communities such as the Eastern Coachella Valley. "These communities are often characterized by substandard housing, poor infrastructure, unsanitary conditions, and unsafe public drinking water." – Ann Cheney Assistant Professor with UC Riverside School of Medicine.

With new funding for farmworker housing becoming available, it will be important to ensure older mobile homes, apartments, or other residences are not left behind.

Additionally, AB 32, the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, requires California to reduce its GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020.

SB 535 required that at least 25% of these funds go to projects that benefit disadvantaged communities, with at least 10% going to projects located within these communities.

Proposal

AB 386 will specifically require that this program and funds be used to improve energy efficiency in farmworker housing in the following ways:

- Weatherization of residences
- Replacement of energy inefficient appliances
- Replacement of lighting
- Installation of photovoltaic solar panels and solar water heating systems
- Installation of battery backups

The bill also requires that this program is developed to be compatible with the state's current energy goals and to avoid duplicating any current energy efficiency programs.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Staff Member: Mark Rossow

Email: Mark.Rossow@asm.ca.gov

Phone: 916.319.2056 Fax: 916.319.2156