



Senator Jerry Hill, 13th Senate District
SB 438 – Earthquake Early Warning System Advisory Board – factsheet

IN BRIEF

SB 438 eliminates current restrictions on public funding and creates an advisory board to support implementation of a statewide earthquake early warning system that will help save lives and protect the public before temblors strike.

THE PROBLEM

California is the second most seismologically active state and in 2013 [SB 135](#) (Padilla) was enacted to require the Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) to develop a comprehensive statewide earthquake early warning system, which is a series of sensors in the ground that detect shaking and send out warnings up to 60 seconds before the shaking occurs. A warning of a few seconds before shaking occurs can have many lifesaving benefits, including providing time for residents to drop and cover, for trains to come to a stop, and for doctors to halt delicate surgeries. Countries such as Japan and Mexico have for a long time operated such a system.

Current law as established by SB 135, however, prohibits the use of General Funds with the intent to finance California’s earthquake early warning system through public-private partnerships. But, those partnerships and funding have yet to materialize, hindering the ability of CalOES to get the warning system up and running.

In addition, the law didn’t establish a governance structure, and effective and sustainable implementation of the system requires a governance structure that can coordinate the multiple agencies involved.

SOLUTION

SB 438 will establish a new California Earthquake Early Warning Advisory Board to advise the Director of CalOES on implementation of the warning system. The Board will meet periodically to provide advice on four functional areas: system operations, research and development, finance and investment, and training and education. The Board will have seven voting members who will serve without compensation:

1. Natural Resources Agency Secretary

2. Health and Human Services Agency Secretary
3. Transportation Agency Secretary
4. Business, Consumer Services, and Housing Agency Secretary
5. A member appointed by the Governor that represents the utilities industry
6. A member appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules that represents county government. The position will switch between northern and southern California
7. A member appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly that represents the interests of private business.

There will also be two non-voting members: one each from the University of California and the California State University.

The bill directs the Advisory Board to help the Director of CalOES develop a business plan for the warning system no later than February 1, 2018. The business plan will provide details on funding for the system, the expected roles and responsibilities of system operators, and will include a discussion of potential risks. After the business plan is developed, CalOES will provide yearly updates to the Legislature.

SB 438 also removes the prohibition on General Fund expenditures.

SUPPORT

- California Institute of Technology (CalTech)
- Silicon Valley Leadership Group
- Mayor Eric Garcetti, City of Los Angeles
- California State Firefighters’ Association
- California Fire Chiefs Association
- Fire Districts Association of California
- Computing Technology Industry Association
- California Department of Insurance
- Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART)

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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