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March 13, 2024

The Honorable Carlos Villapudua
Chair, Assembly Committee on Jobs, Economic Development, and the Economy
1021 O Street, Suite 6340
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 2757 (Garcia, Padilla) – Southeast California Economic Region – SUPPORT

Dear Chair Villapudua and Committee Members:

City of Imperial writes in support for Assembly Bill 2757 by Assembly member Eduardo Garcia and Senator Steve Padilla which would designate the Southeast California Economic Region for the purpose of aligning state and federal programs to benefit communities impacted by lithium and other mineral extraction and clean energy development. This bill also allows for regional collaboration to create a strategic plan for economic development in the region as the Blue-Ribbon Commission on Lithium Extraction in California deemed in their report's recommendations.

“The City of Imperial strives to be an economically vibrant and culturally rich community with a strong sense of identity, pride and prosperity.”

Economic regions in the United States promote economic development in distressed areas in the country. Currently, the Imperial Valley is grouped with San Diego as the Southern Border Region while the Eastern Coachella and Palo Verde Valleys are grouped together with the Inland Empire as part of the greater Southern California Region. Such division dilutes the interests and opportunities for constituents and developers in the Imperial, the Eastern Coachella, and Palo Verde Valleys. These Salton Sea communities all share the following hardships with each other more than they do with their current economic regional designations:

- Environmental and economic implications due to Salton Sea degradation.
- Unemployment rates higher than the state average.
- Median income rates lower than the state average.
- Lack of infrastructure.
- Decreased local revenue.

AB 2757 will create an economic region that prioritizes and encourages the economic development of the Salton Sea region for the benefit of the surrounding disadvantaged communities.

We urge your “YES” vote when the measure is heard in your Committee.

Sincerely,

**Robert Amparano
Mayor
City of Imperial**



Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia, 36th Assembly District

AB XXXX – Southeast California Economic Region

Updated 2/12/24

BACKGROUND

The Imperial, Eastern Coachella, and Palo Verde Valleys face many of the same economic challenges. California’s “Lithium Valley” located around these areas contains one of the largest and most environmentally sustainable lithium reserves in the world. By creating an economic zone around “Lithium Valley”, there is a great opportunity to encourage economic development around these areas.

AB 1657 (E. Garcia 2020), established the Lithium Valley Commission comprised of 14 members representing state agencies, private industry, local government and environmental groups, as well as, government appointees. This commission was tasked with exploring opportunities and challenges in developing the state’s lithium industry and providing a report on its findings to the legislature. One of the recommendations being the creation of the South Eastern Desert Economic Zone to advance economic expansion around California’s Lithium Valley.

ISSUE

Economic zones in the United States promote economic development in distressed areas in the country.

Currently, the Imperial Valley is grouped with San Diego as the Southern Border Region while the Eastern Coachella and Palo Verde Valleys are grouped together with the Inland Empire as part of the greater Southern California Region. Such division dilutes the interests and opportunities for constituents in the Imperial, Eastern Coachella, and Palo Verde Valleys. These areas face hardships that are more alike than their current economic zone designations such as:

- Environmental and economic implications due to Salton Sea degradation.
- Unemployment rates higher than the state average.

- Median income rates lower than the state average.
- Lack of infrastructure.
- Decreased local revenue.

BILL SUMMARY

This bill would:

- establish the Southeast California Economic Region, which will facilitate collaboration with state, federal, regional, and local organizations, entities, and governments on issues of mutual interest that advance the economy and quality of life of residents and businesses.
- capture the full benefits of the Lithium Valley renewable energy development hub, the southeastern desert valleys need a definitive economic development designation that supports efficient resource attraction and fosters economic relationships between business, labor, and community.
- Help the region compete for federal, state, and local funding and investments.

SUPPORT

Alianza
Comite Civico Del Valle
Los Amigos

For More Information:

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