FACT SHEET: SB 313
SENATOR WILLIAM MONNING
SCHOOL SITES IN AGRICULTURAL ZONES

PROPOSED BILL

Senate Bill (SB) 313 will require school boards to provide a 30-day notice to a city or county governing body prior to a vote that will negate existing zoning ordinances for the proposed school site, as well as require school boards to provide written findings as to why existing zoning ordinances fail to meet the school district’s school site needs.

SB 313 will additionally mandate that school boards comply with existing public health and safety requirements before building student classrooms in areas zoned for agricultural production.

BACKGROUND

While a city or county’s elected governing board determines the planning vision for its municipality through the passage of zoning ordinances, school boards have long had the ability to negate these zoning ordinances to allow for classroom construction.

This action by school boards removes local control from planning decisions and allows school sites to be placed in green-field developments, which is inconsistent with sustainable communities’ plans required under Senate Bill 375 (Steinberg), Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008.

Placing schools in exclusive agricultural production zones not only removes limited agricultural land from production, but also raises important public health concerns about exposing students to pesticide drift and contamination.

While there are existing notification requirements that a school board must follow before siting a school outside a local general plan, there is still a glaring need for greater awareness by cities, counties, and the public as to why existing zoning is inadequate for school construction.

SOLUTION

SB 313 will allow for greater transparency in school-site planning decisions by requiring better communication between local governments, school boards and the public before student classrooms are built in agricultural production zones. The measure will ensure there is public discourse on planning decisions that potentially place school classrooms in exclusive agricultural zones that may present health and safety issues.

SUPPORT

California Farm Bureau Federation
(sponsor)
American Planning Association, California Chapter
California State Association of Counties
Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors
Napa County

OPPOSITION

California Building Industry Association
Coalition for Adequate School Housing

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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