

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HILDA L. SOLIS

May 13, 2025

Expanding Employment Opportunities for Formerly Incarcerated Wildland Firefighters

In early January, Los Angeles County experienced one of the most devastating wildfires in its history. In response, numerous County of Los Angeles (County) departments, first responders, and residents mobilized to protect communities and mitigate the damage. Firefighters from across the State, including approximately 800 state-incarcerated wildland firefighters, were deployed to help contain the fires.¹ These individuals worked tirelessly alongside professional firefighters, constructing containment lines, clearing brush, and extinguishing hotspots.

Despite their critical contributions, incarcerated wildland firefighters receive only between \$5.80 and \$10.24 per day from the State, plus \$1 per hour for active emergency response.² Even under these conditions, their dedication to public safety underscores the immense value they provide to our communities. However, upon release, many of these individuals face significant barriers to obtaining wildland firefighting employment due to their criminal records.

Recognizing the importance of removing these barriers, the California Legislature

¹ Sam Levin., *‘Essential’: nearly 800 incarcerated firefighters deployed as LA battles wildfires*, The Guardian (Jan, 09, 2025). <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jan/08/la-wildfires-incarcerated-firefighters>

² Id.

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enacted AB 2147,³ which allows formerly incarcerated individuals who participated in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Fire Camp Program or a County incarcerated individual hand crew member to expunge non-violent felonies from their records—helping them pursue careers in wildland firefighting. Additionally, during this state legislative cycle, at least two bills aimed at helping incarcerated firefighters have been introduced. Assemblymember Isaac Bryan introduced AB 247⁴, which would require that, while incarcerated firefighters are actively fighting a fire, their wages be increased to \$19 per hour. Senator Lola Smallwood-Cuevas introduced SB 423,⁵ aims to enhance workforce development for incarcerated firefighters by developing a tiered training program and establishing a firefighter apprenticeship framework. While these bills are an important step forward, more must be done at the local level to ensure that those who have demonstrated their commitment to public service have a viable pathway into the wildland firefighting profession.

The County has a unique opportunity to build on this progress by establishing a pipeline program that facilitates career opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals with wildland firefighting experience. Creating a Career Development Intern-Wildland Fire Firefighter (CDI-WF) position within the County's workforce would provide a structured pathway for these individuals and strengthen our emergency response capacity by leveraging their specialized wildfire response skills. By taking these steps,

³ [AB 2147](#)

⁴ [AB 247](#)

⁵ [SB 423](#), Enhancing Workforce Development for Incarcerated Firefighters Act

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the County can recognize the invaluable contributions of incarcerated wildland

firefighters and provide them with the opportunity to build meaningful careers in public service.

Additionally, the Los Angeles County Justice, Care and Opportunities Department (JCOD) has worked collaboratively with the Los Angeles County Fire Department (LACoFD) to provide wildland, structural, and hazardous material training to formerly justice-involved participants of the Los Angeles County Training Center (LACTC). Graduates of the LACTC can apply for employment with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) and other fire service agencies, but there is currently no career pathway with our County Fire Department. It is time that we create this pathway for formally justice-involved individuals that receive the appropriate training to be given an opportunity to work with LACoFD as a wildland firefighter.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors to:

1. Direct the Chief Executive Office (CEO), the Los Angeles County Fire Department (LACoFD), the Director of Human Resources (DHR), the Justice, Care, and Opportunities Department (JCOD), the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO), the Probation Department, the Public Defender (PD), the Alternate Public Defender (APD) and other relevant departments to:
 - a. Establish a sub-specialty, Career Development Intern - Wildland Fire Firefighter (CDI-WF) item, and/or other items, that provide entry-level

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employment opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals with wildland firefighting experience that prepares participants to qualify for wildland firefighting positions with Los Angeles County, including but not limited to Fire Suppression Aid, Senior Fire Suppression Aid, and other fire related career options.

- b. Develop a pipeline program to connect individuals released from local or State custody with workforce opportunities, including:
 1. Providing information to formally incarcerated wildland firefighters in JCOD's Los Angeles County Training Center (LACTC);
 2. Assisting participants to apply to CDI-WF positions; and
 3. Recommendations for integration with existing County pipeline programs such as Preparing Los Angeles for County Employment (PLACE) and Countywide Youth Bridges Program (CYBP) and any additional training programs that may be needed to meet the needs of LACoFD.
2. Direct JCOD, in collaboration with LACoFD and the Probation Department, to establish a structure to ensure that graduates from have ongoing access to mentorship and personal and professional development to support their successful integration into LACoFD.
3. Direct LACoFD, in collaboration with JCOD, to design robust ongoing training program that includes certifications for wildland, structural, hazardous material,

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and Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) for LACTC participants providing

them minimally with the same level of training and support that they would provide to any other recruit so they will have the appropriate credentials to serve as Hand Crew member in fire suppression efforts and other firefighting positions throughout the County.

4. Direct LACoFD, in collaboration with County Counsel, to report back in writing within 60 days with an analysis of the LACoFD background/exclusion criteria, including identification of any requirements that will need to be waived to open employment opportunities for formerly justice-involved individuals to be employed by LACoFD, including an analysis of whether such criteria may be waived or revised. Direct that those are waived while maintaining the safety and professionalism of LACoFD.
 - a. Certain offenses may disqualify an applicant, including arson and Penal Code Section 290 sex offenses. All other applicants will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
5. Direct the PD and APD to report back in writing within 60 days on a proposal to facilitate and expedite expungement assistance/support for LACTC and the State's Fire Camps Program participants.
6. Direct CEO, DHR, DEO, LACoFD, JCOD, PD, and APD to identify potential funding sources to support the programs listed in the above directives and to expand training resources as needed to meet the workforce needs of LACoFD

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and other fire agencies.

7. Direct CEO, DHR, DEO, LACoFD, JCOD, PD, and APD to provide a written report to the Board within 60 days on the above directives.

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