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# California’s New Landscaping Rules: You May Soon Be Required to Fire-Proof Your Yard

By Edward Henderson, California Black Media

Legislation could go into effect by the end of this year, changing the way Californians landscape their homes.

In 2020, California enacted Assembly Bill 3074, mandating property owners to create an “ember-resistant zone” — referred to as “Zone 0” — within five feet of homes in designated high fire hazard areas. The legislation aims to reduce the risk of homes igniting from wind-driven embers during wildfires, a leading cause of structural fires.

However, many homeowners across the state — like Oakland Resident Tina Sanders — have not yet heard about the pending rules and have not begun making plans or saving money to be able to comply with it should the new safety rules go into effect soon

“I don’t know much about the Zone 0 law, but I think that the state should provide more information about it and help people prepare for this sudden change,” Sanders told CBM.

“I understand why it needs to happen, but people who aren’t aware or can’t afford to make these changes deserve assistance,” she added.

Other homeowners are worried that following Zone 0 rules could negatively impact the curb appeal of their homes, affecting their property values.

When Gov. Gavin Newsom issued Executive Order N-18-25 in February, he directed the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection to expedite the adoption of Zone 0 regulations.

“We are living in a new reality of extremes. Believe the science — and your own damn eyes: Mother Nature is changing the way we live, and we must continue adapting to those changes.”

Despite the law’s passage in 2020, implementation has faced delays. Originally set to take effect in

2023, the regulations have not been finalized, leaving many homeowners uncertain about compliance requirements.

While compliance with the Zone 0 regulations is currently recommended but not mandatory, the fire department has already completed nearly 6,000 inspections, identifying over 1,900 violations of existing fire safety regulations.

In some cities like Berkeley, for example, the local government is already providing guidance to homeowners on how they can fire-proof their homes.

“You are responsible for keeping your property safe,” Berkeley’s website reminds residents.

“The first 5 feet around your home is the most important area to clear of vegetation and combustible materials since it is closest to buildings, structures, and decks,” the messaging on the website goes on. “In the Ember-Resistant Zone, dead vegetation creates the highest risk for ignition, but even living vegetation can pose a threat in Ignition Zone 0, especially for properties in the hills.”

CAL FIRE has also provided prevention information on their website regarding “fire smart landscaping.”

When the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection met in Sacramento from June 16 to 18, implementation of Zone Zero was high on different agendas for meeting attendees. However, the board has said it is still in the “pre-rule-making phase.”

Once finalized, the rules will apply immediately to new constructions in State Responsibility Areas and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. These include areas in Los Angeles County (Rancho Palos Verdes, Calabasas, Malibu), Ventura County, and portions of Riverside, San Diego, and San Bernardino counties. In addition, El Dorado County (South Lake Tahoe, Pollock Pines) and Lake Arrowhead in San Bernardino County are also desig-

# Prop 36 Is Triggering an Arrest Surge in California, Hitting Black Communities Hard



Asm. Isaac Bryan (D-Ladera Heights), Vice Chair of the California Legislative Black Caucus, called Prop 36 a “war on poor people” after learning that the backlog of cases is disproportionately impacting the Black community. CBM photo by Antonio Ray Harvey. File photo.

By Antonio Ray Harvey California Black Media

Six months after California’s Prop 36 took effect, early data shows a rise in arrests — with the law disproportionately affecting Black communities in some parts of the state.

Also known as the “Homelessness, Drug Addiction, and Theft Reduction Act,” the measure was overwhelmingly passed by voters in the November 2024 general election. Prop 36 increased penalties for certain drug and theft crimes, reclassifying some as felonies, and lengthened sentences for specific offenses.

Assemblymember Isaac Bryan (D-Ladera Heights), the vice chair of the California Legislative Black Caucus (CLBC), raised concerns about the effects of Prop 36.

“Instead of a war on poverty, California’s legal system has initiated a war on poor people,” Bryan told California Black Media (CBM). “We deserve better. We have to fight for the economic opportunities our community deserves.”

According to a report by Voice of San Diego, via San Diego Census and San Diego Police Department, data shows that 32% of 374 people arrested for Prop 36-related drug or theft charges in the city from the middle of December through May were Black. Out of 1.9 million residents, Black people make up 5.6% of the city’s population.

Ricardo D. García, the Chief Public Defender for Los Angeles County, shared with CBM that Prop 36 cases have risen since the law went into effect on Dec. 18, 2024.

“Poverty, homelessness, drug addiction, and mental illness are driving factors,” he says.

“Prop 36 disproportionately hurts Black, Brown, and immigrant communities,” García said. “We are already under-resourced. Prop 36 and its treatment mandates are meaningless if there’s no bed, no place for someone to go to.”

Before Prop 36 became law, the L.A. County jails had a population of just over 11,000 inmates, but it quickly rose above 12,000, and reached over 13,000 in May, before falling to the “12,900 range” before the 4th of July holiday.

“We saw 12 arrests before Prop 36 on these types of offenses and since May of 2025, we are looking at 594 arrests,” García said.

Prop 36 emerged as a policy response to rising concerns across the state about crimes like shoplifting, smash-and-grabs and other forms of property theft.

Legislative Republicans, however, were advocating for \$400 million to support Prop 36 implementation.

The lawmakers also pushed ongoing funding.

“This initiative was passed by the people, and I think they wanted ongoing funding,” Sen. Tony Strickland (R-Huntington Beach) told CBM in his Capitol Swing Space Annex office. “I can’t recall the last initiative that passed all 58 counties — even those liberal counties like Marin and San Francisco voted for this.”

Yoel Haile, the Director of the Criminal Justice Program at the ACLU of Northern California (NorCal ACLU), penned a commentary about the number of Prop 36 cases that are popping up in the Bay Area.

About 90% of the people from north Alameda County charged under Prop 36 are Black, while Black people make up just 10% of Alameda County’s total population, according to Haile.

Many of the cases, Haile told CBM, involve individuals committing petty theft to attain necessities such as food, toothpaste, diapers, and soap.

“Arresting someone for that and giving them a record is not going to solve their problem,” Haile said. “We have to push D.A.s not to criminalize and charge everything that comes across their desk.”



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# Gov. Newsom’s 4th of July Message Shines Light on America’s Fight for Equality and Opportunity

By Bo Tefu California Black Media

In his proclamation declaring July 4, 2025, Independence Day in California, Gov. Gavin Newsom centered his message on equality, freedom and opportunity, reminding Californians that they have a stake in the fight to keep the dream of America alive.

The Governor said, since the founding of the country, “Americans have fought and died to safeguard the promise of our democracy and all its ideals.”

He also reminded Californians that America has not always guaranteed freedom and

opportunity to all — and that it has taken sacrifice and determination to achieve the freedoms we celebrate on the Fourth of July.

“The struggles and triumphs of generations of Americans have continued our progress toward this goal, and the work is far from over,” he said. “Relentless attacks across the country, from the highest levels, try to weaken and erase our fundamental rights and freedoms, threatening to undo decades of hard-won progress we’ve made as a nation

Newsom promised that California will never “back down

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## NOTICE AND DIGEST AN ORDINANCE

(1)AMENDINGTITLE15OFTHEOAKLANDMUNICIPALCODETOUPDATE AND REVISE THE REGULATIONS FOR THE JOBS/HOUSING IMPACT FEE (CHAPTER 15.68), AFFORDABLE HOUSING IMPACT FEE (CHAPTER 15.72), AND TRANSPORTATION AND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT IMPACT FEES (CHAPTER 15.74);

(2) AMENDING THE CITY OF OAKLAND MASTER FEE SCHEDULE (ADOPTED BY ORDINANCE NO. 13799 C.M.S., AS AMENDED) TO CALCULATE IMPACT FEES FOR RESIDENTIAL PROJECTS ON A SQUARE FOOTAGE BASIS; AND

(3) MAKING APPROPRIATE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT FINDINGS

This Ordinance amends the Oakland Municipal Code to update and revise regulations for the Jobs/Housing Impact Fee (Chapter 15.68), Affordable Housing Impact Fee (Chapter 15.72), and Transportation and Capital Improvement Impact Fees (Chapter 15.74). This Ordinance also amends the City’s Master Fee Schedule to calculate impact fees for residential projects on a square footage basis. Finally, this Ordinance adopts various findings including findings related to exemptions under the California Environmental Quality Act.

### Notice of Publication

This Ordinance was introduced at the City Council meeting, Tuesday afternoon **July 1, 2025**, and passed to print **7 Ayes; 1 Excused - Fife**. Final adoption has been scheduled for the City Council meeting Tuesday evening **July 15, 2025, 3:30 P.M.**, at One Frank H. Ogawa Plaza, Council Chamber, 3rd floor, Oakland, California, and via Teleconference.

Three full copies are available for use and examination by the public in the Office of the City Clerk at One Frank H. Ogawa Plaza, 1st floor, Oakland, California.

ASHA REED, City Clerk



## NOTICE AND DIGEST

**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE SALARY SCHEDULE OF ORDINANCE NO. 12187 C.M.S. (“SALARY ORDINANCE”) TO: (A) ADD THE FULL-TIME CLASSIFICATION OF PARKING CONTROL TECHNICIAN II; AND (B) ADD THE FULL-TIME CLASSIFICATION OF OAK311 COMMUNICATIONS CENTER SPECIALIST, SENIOR; AND (C) ADD THE FULL-TIME, PERMANENT PART-TIME, AND PART-TIME EQUIVALENT CLASSIFICATIONS OF OAK311 COMMUNICATIONS CENTER SPECIALIST; AND (D) AMEND THE TITLE OF THE FULL-TIME AND PERMANENT PART-TIME EQUIVALENT CLASSIFICATIONS OF TRANSPORTATION PLANNER, SENIOR TO TRANSPORTATION PLANNER, SUPERVISING; AND (E) AMEND THE SALARY OF THE PART-TIME CLASSIFICATION OF SENIOR AIDE, PT TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH THE CITY OF OAKLAND’S MINIMUM WAGE ORDINANCE**

This ordinance authorizes changes to the City’s Classification Plan as shown in the City’s Salary Schedule to add three new classifications and amend existing titles and salary rates. Parking Control Technician II positions will be added to the Department of Transportation to enforce parking regulations, issue citations, and increase capacity to deliver services to the community. OAK311 Communications Center Specialist, Senior and OAK311 Communications Center Specialist classifications are being added to the Office of the City Administrator to replace the existing call center positions following the creation of new job descriptions. In the Department of Transportation, the classification title for Transportation Planner, Senior is being revised to ensure better alignment of the levels within the job series. Lastly, the pay rate for the Senior Aide, PT classification is being raised to align with the City of Oakland’s new minimum wage rate that took effect January 1, 2025 per requirements in Measure FF and the Oakland Municipal Code Section 5.92.

### Notice of Publication

This Ordinance was introduced at the City Council meeting, Tuesday afternoon June 17, 2025, and passed to print 7 Ayes; 1 No – Gallo. Final adoption has been scheduled for the City Council meeting Tuesday evening July 15, 2025, 3:30 P.M., at One Frank H. Ogawa Plaza, Council Chamber, 3rd floor, Oakland, California, and via Teleconference.

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