

County Service Area Law Revamped

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Senate Bill 1458 (Senate Local Government Committee) was chaptered by the Secretary of State on July 21, 2008 and becomes effective January 1, 2009. This bill represents a complete overhaul of the existing law governing County Service Areas (CSAs). While there have been a few amendments and initiatives over the years, there has not been a comprehensive review of the CSA law since it was passed in 1953.

SB 1458 repeals the 1953 CSA law and provides a new statute that changes policy, power, procedures and oversight. It is intended to be clearer, better organized, and more concise. The CSA law has been renumbered, with the number of sections reduced from 166 to 50. The revision is better harmonized with common practice and clarifies procedural issues. Importantly, SB 1458 aligns the CSA law with the State Constitution and the provisions of Propositions 13 and 218.

The major changes include:

- The statements of legislative findings and declarations have been revised and updated
- Formation process restructured and basic powers consolidated
- Clarifies CSAs relationship with LAFCOs
- Allows CSAs to provide any service that a county may provide
- Provides clarification regarding loans from counties and other revenue sources
- Streamlines use of zones
- References compliance with provisions of Proposition 218
- Recognizes the county board of supervisors as governing authority
- Requires formal budgets and financial reports

Last but not least, this bill provides for a more robust, responsive, and accountable CSA in the 21st century, with fiscal transparency, optional advisory committees, and clear record retention policies.