
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Senator Melissa Hurtado, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	SB 493	Hearing Date:	4/29/25
Author:	Becker		
Version:	2/19/25		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	Yes
Consultant:	Reichel Everhart		

Subject: District agricultural associations: secretary-managers: compensation

SUMMARY:

This bill changes how fair managers' salaries are determined. It renames fair managers as secretary-managers of district agricultural associations and shifts the responsibility for setting their pay to the Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA). The Secretary must establish a single salary range, conduct a salary survey every three years, and ensure pay stays within existing limits until the first survey. After that, the maximum salary cannot exceed the highest comparable position's salary, except for cost-of-living adjustments, merit increases, or additional pay for managing multiple districts.

BACKGROUND AND EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes what may be considered when determining the basis of compensation to fair managers of fairs that are classified under the Food and Agricultural Code section 4507 (*Food and Agricultural Code Section 4508*).
- 2) States the department may classify, and shall consider, at least once every five years, whether to classify or reclassify, fairs. The department may request advice and recommendations from boards of directors of fairs for this purpose. In making classifications, the department may also consider the following (*Food and Agricultural Code section 4507*):
 - a. The type and class of agricultural, including livestock, industrial, and natural resources that are exhibited, and the amount of premiums that are paid in accordance with the approved premium list of the fair.
 - b. Whether the fair is regional in nature, offers a special feature for agriculture, livestock, or industry, or is a sectional fair limiting exhibits to the region in which the fair is held, and any other characteristics and factors that the department deems necessary.

- c. The ratio of attendance at the fair to the population of the area that is served by it.
- d. The efficiency of management, including operational procedures, revenue from sources other than the state, quality of exhibits, and community interest in the fair.
- e. The extent and nature of interim utilization of fair property as promoted by the fair management.
- f. The need of the fair for money from state sources.

PROPOSED LAW:

This bill:

- 1) Renames fair managers to be secretary-managers of district agricultural associations.
- 2) Transfers the duty to fix compensation for a secretary-manager to the secretary of the department.
- 3) Requires the secretary to set a single salary range for the compensation of a secretary-manager and, in determining the salary range, on or before January 1, 2027, and every 3 years thereafter, conduct a salary survey of other federal, state, and regional and local positions in similar industries and other relevant labor pools.
- 4) Requires, until the first survey is completed, the compensation for a secretary-manager to remain within certain existing ranges, regardless of fair classification.
- 5) Prohibits, after the first survey, the maximum salary limit of the salary range for a secretary-manager from exceeding the highest salary for a position comparable to a secretary-manager, as determined, by the most recent survey, except for specifically required cost-of-living increases, authorized merit increases and increases for secretary-managers managing multiple districts.

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: According to the author:

California's fairgrounds are not just venues for entertainment and a storied part of our agricultural history—they are critical infrastructure that serves as the backbone of our state's emergency response network. However, there is a loophole in state law that prevents some

fair employees from receiving competitive salaries and benefits that commensurate with the work they perform as compared to other similar positions, thus limiting recruitment and retention opportunities. SB 493 ensures that the Secretary-Managers, who are responsible for maintaining these venues and responding to disasters, receive fair and competitive compensation. By implementing periodic salary reviews and recognizing the challenges of managing multiple fairgrounds, this bill will help retain experienced professionals who play a vital role in serving our communities.

The California Emergency Response Resiliency Venues and Fairgrounds Association, the sponsors of the bill, state the need for this legislation is based on the crucial role that California's fairgrounds play in our state's emergency response infrastructure and that secretary-managers are tasked with overseeing these critical facilities, ensuring they are operational and ready for emergency deployment 24/7, 365 days a year.

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION:

None received.

SUPPORT:

California Emergency Response Resiliency Venues and Fairgrounds (Sponsor)
Antelope Valley Fair Association
Big Fresno Fair, 21st District Agricultural Association
Cow Palace, 1-A District Agricultural Association
Desert Empire Fairgrounds and Event Center, 53rd District Agricultural Association
Gold Country Fairgrounds and Event Center, 20th District Agricultural Association
Kern County Fair & Event Center, 15th District Agricultural Association
Kings County Fairgrounds, 24A District Agricultural Association
Napa Valley Exposition, 25th District Agricultural Association
Pickering Events LLC
Redwood Acres Fairgrounds, 9th District Agricultural Association
San Bernardino County Fairgrounds, 28th District Agricultural Association
San Mateo County Event Center and Fairgrounds
Tulare County Fairgrounds, 24th District Agricultural Associate
Ventura County Fairgrounds

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