

Assembly Bill 672

Golf Courses & Affordable Housing

Assemblymember Cristina Garcia (D – 58)

SUMMARY

Assembly Bill (AB) 672 would establish a grant program to provide incentives in the form of grants to local governments that make publicly owned golf courses available for housing and publicly accessible open spaces.

BACKGROUND & PROBLEM

Golf courses proliferate in and around California's urban centers. As golf declines, the state can craft a "grand bargain" to encourage redevelopment of golf courses in a way that promotes equity and affordability, and fights climate change.

California is home to 921 public and private golf courses. They vary substantially in size; but often consume about 100 acres of land. Some are better candidates for conversion than others. Ideal sites would be in urban areas with a significant jobs-housing imbalance, and where nearby residents have limited open space. 150 courses could produce 15,000 acres of housing, commercial activity, and open space. At an average density of 40 units per acre, they could produce as many as 600,000 homes, including 150,000 low and very low income affordable homes, and 2,250 acres of public open space.

In the 80s and 90s, golf was on the upswing; but as the National Golf Foundation reports, since 2006, golf is declining. Golf courses struggle to stay open. Some locales subsidize municipal courses. It is reasonable to expect their decline will continue.

Golf courses are labeled as open space. Who can access golf courses? Only those who know how to or can afford to play golf. Pay-to-play leisure activities do not serve low and moderate-income Californians. The state can help convert golf courses, which serve hundreds, into housing that saves thousands from homelessness, extreme rents, and denial of access to home ownership.

In his election campaign, Governor Gavin Newsom proposed an ambitious target to build 500,000 homes per year to alleviate our housing shortage. However, in 2020, when homebuilding grew in other states, construction declined in California, which permitted only 104,500 new residences. California is losing ground in the housing crisis.

SOLUTION

Provide \$50 million in funding to the California Department of Housing and Community Development to distribute to local agencies that have an agreement in place to convert publicly owned golf courses in affordable housing and dedicated open space that is accessible by all.

STATUS

Assembly Housing Committee

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