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AB 2404 – The Valley Voices Act

Summary:

AB 2404 mandates that at least one member of the State Board of Education, the California Veterans Board, the Career Technical Education advisory group convened by the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Financial Solvency Standards Board, and the Citizen's Financial Accountability Oversight Committee be a resident of the San Joaquin Valley. The San Joaquin Valley being defined as Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tulare Counties. The measure does not remove current members from their terms but instead requires future appointments to ensure regional representation in statewide policymaking.

Existing Law:

Existing law establishes numerous statewide boards and advisory bodies, including the State Board of Education, the Financial Solvency Standards Board, and the California Veterans Board, and specifies how members are appointed and what qualifications they must have. These requirements

typically focus on ensuring members have relevant expertise, professional experience, or stakeholder representation, such as educators, industry representatives, public members, or veterans. In some cases, statutes encourage appointments that reflect the diversity of California's population. However, existing law generally does not require representation from any specific geographic region, such as the San Joaquin Valley, and instead leaves appointment decisions to the discretion of the appointing authority to ensure qualified and balanced membership.

Problem:

Despite the San Joaquin Valley's significant population, agricultural production, workforce contribution, economic impact, and potential for future growth, the region is often underrepresented in decision making regarding statewide policy recommendations. Policies adopted by state boards and advisory groups directly affect San Joaquin Valley constituents, and their livelihoods.



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The San Joaquin Valley experiences distinct regional realities including higher poverty rates, air quality challenges, workforce development gaps, and rural access barriers that differ substantially from coastal and metropolitan areas. When statewide bodies lack representation from the Valley, policies may unintentionally overlook or inadequately address the needs of millions of residents. Without a statutory mechanism to ensure regional inclusion, these disparities in representation can persist in critical state-level decision-making.

Solution:

AB 2404 strengthens statewide governance by ensuring that the San Joaquin Valley has a voice in key state boards and advisory bodies that shape education, workforce development, veterans' services, and public accountability. By requiring at least one member from the region on each specified body, the bill promotes

geographic diversity in decision-making and ensures that policies reflect the needs of communities across California that often go unheard. The measure preserves existing appointment authority and respects current members' terms, applying prospectively to future appointments. In doing so, it provides a balanced and practical approach to improving representation without disrupting ongoing governance. Overall, the bill reinforces equitable regional inclusion, enhances the legitimacy of statewide policymaking, and ensures that the San Joaquin Valley's economic and community perspectives are represented at the highest levels of state decision-making.

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