

Date of Hearing:

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT, SPORTS, AND TOURISM

Christopher M. Ward, Chair

AB 666 (Rogers) – As Amended March 28, 2025

SUBJECT: State cryptid

SUMMARY: This bill would establish Bigfoot as the official state cryptid.

Specifically, **this bill:**

This bill makes the following legislative findings:

- 1) The most famous and beloved cryptid in contemporary California culture is the creature known as Bigfoot.
- 2) A cryptid, for the purposes of this act, is defined as a creature that is believed to exist, but whose existence has not been proven definitively by science.
- 3) Bigfoot is a legendary cryptid, with origins in the County of Humboldt in California.
- 4) Willow Creek, California, is widely recognized as the Bigfoot capital of the world, hosting the annual Bigfoot Daze Festival, bringing in approximately 2,000 people annually from across the world, doubling the population of the local community, to appreciate this iconic cryptid.
- 5) The Willow Creek - China Flat Museum reports that its Bigfoot collection draws the most attention, with the museum bringing in 2,000 to 3,000 tourists per year.
- 6) While the legends of a large, hairy, elusive creature persist in many parts of the world, its etymological origins reside firmly in California, with the first use of the term “Bigfoot” in 1958 by Andrew Genzoli for the Humboldt Times newspaper.
- 7) This documented first use of “Bigfoot” squatches any other region or state’s claim to the legendary creature.
- 8) Over the ensuing decades, Bigfoot has come to be associated with the stunning forests and wilderness of California, being sighted across the state.
- 9) Since Bigfoot was first sighted in the County of Humboldt, it has since captured public imagination and energized popular culture across the world.
- 10) Bigfoot has come to represent California’s own meteoric growth as the premier storytelling capital of the world, capturing the hearts and imaginations of people from all backgrounds.
- 11) The search for Bigfoot has generated unquantifiable growth in tourism in rural areas, particularly on the North Coast where Bigfoot has repeatedly been sighted. This robust economic activity is most visible in the many roadside stops throughout the region proudly selling Bigfoot-themed wares.

- 12) Popular descriptions of Bigfoot have described the cryptid as a large, bipedal hairy ape with environmental zeal, making the mysterious hominid an excellent mascot for California's wilderness and culture.
- 13) Naming Bigfoot as the official state cryptid of California will promote tourism for California's wilderness and rural communities, as well as education, appreciation, and cultural preservation of California's local folklore and cultural heritage.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the Bear Flag as the State Flag of California. (Government Code (GOV) section 420)
- 2) Designates the following as official state emblems:
 - a) "Eureka" as the official State Motto. (GOV 420.5)
 - b) "The Golden State" as the official State Nickname. (GOV 420.75)
 - c) The golden poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*) as the official State Flower. (GOV 421)
 - d) The West Coast Swing Dance as the official state dance. (GOV 421.5 (a))
 - e) The Square Dance as the official state folk dance. (GOV 421.5 (b))
 - f) "I Love You, California" as an official state song. (GOV 421.7)
 - g) The California redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*, *Sequoia gigantea*) as the official state tree. (GOV 422)
 - h) The almond (*Prunus dulcis*, *Prunus amygdalus*), walnut, pistachio, and pecan as the official state nuts. (GOV 422.3)
 - i) The California desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) as the official state reptile. (GOV 422.5 (a))
 - j) The Pacific leatherback sea turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) as the official state marine reptile. (GOV 422.5 (b))
 - k) The California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*) as the official state amphibian. (GOV 422.7)
 - l) The California valley quail (*Lophortyx californica*) as the official bird and avifaunal emblem of the State. (GOV 423)
 - m) "The Californian" as the official state tall ship. (GOV 423.5)
 - n) Denim as the official state fabric. (GOV 423.6)
 - o) Blue and gold as the official state colors. (GOV 424)

- p) The pattern and colors of a “sett” based on the family tartan of John Muir as the official State Tartan. (GOV 424.3)
- q) The California dog-face butterfly (*Zerene Eurydice*) as the official State Insect. (GOV 424.5)
- r) Lace lichen (*Ramalina menziesii*) as the official state lichen. (GOV 424.6)
- s) Surfing as the official state sport. (GOV 424.7)
- t) The California Grizzly Bear (*Ursus Californicus*) as the official state animal. (GOV 425)
- u) Native gold as the official State Mineral and mineralogic emblem. (GOV 425.1)
- v) Serpentine as the official State Rock and lithologic emblem. (GOV 425.2)
- w) Benitoite as the official state gemstone. (GOV 425.3)
- x) The California gray whale (*Eschrichtius robustus*) as the official State Marine Mammal. (GOV 425.5)
- y) The garibaldi (*Hypsypops rubicundus*) as the official state marine fish. (GOV 425.6)
- z) The *Augustynolophus morrisoni* as the official state dinosaur. (GOV 425.7 (a))
- aa) The saber-toothed cat (*Smilodon californicus*) as the official state fossil. (GOV 425.7 (b))
- bb) The Chipped Stone Bear (bear-shaped eccentric) as the official state prehistoric artifact. (GOV 425.8)
- cc) San Joaquin Soil as the official State Soil. (GOV 425.9)
- dd) Purple needlegrass, or *Nassella pulchra*, as the official State Grass. (GOV 425.10)
- ee) California Golden Chanterelle (*Cantharellus californicus*) as the official state mushroom. (GOV 425.11)
- ff) The pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*) as the official state bat. (GOV 425.12)
- gg) The banana slug (*Ariolimax*) as the official state slug. (GOV 425.13)
- hh) The shell of the black abalone (*Haliotis cracherodii*) as the official state seashell. (GOV 425.14)
- ii) The Dungeness crab (*Metacarcinus magister*) is the official state crustacean. (GOV 425.15)
- jj) The LGBTQ Veterans Memorial at the Desert Memorial Park in Cathedral City as the official state LGBTQ veterans memorial. (GOV 429.4)
- kk) The California Historical Society as the official state historical society. (GOV 429.5)

- ll) The California State Military Museum and Resource Center as the official state military museum. (GOV 429.6)
- mm) Bodie as the official state gold rush ghost town. (GOV 429.7)
- nn) Calico as the official state silver rush ghost town. (GOV 429.8)
- oo) The California Vietnam Veterans Memorial as the official state Vietnam veterans war memorial. (GOV 429.9)

FISCAL EFFECT: None. This bill is keyed non-fiscal.

COMMENTS:

- 1) Author's statement. According to the author, "The question of 'which mythical creature best represents California' is a hairy one. It's not Tahoe Tessie or El Chupacabra that generates buzz and interest from outdoor enthusiasts, it is Bigfoot. And while other countries like Russia, France, and Germany have added Bigfoot to the endangered species list, here in California we know that something more is afoot.

"While those legends of a large, hairy, elusive creature persist in many parts of the world, its etymological origins reside firmly in California, with the first use of the term "Bigfoot" in 1958 by Andrew Genzoli for the Humboldt Times newspaper. This documented first use of "Bigfoot" squatches any other region or state's claim to the legendary creature. Over the ensuing decades, Bigfoot has come to be associated with the stunning forests and wilderness of California, being sighted across the state. Since Bigfoot was first sighted in the County of Humboldt, it has since captured public imagination and energized popular culture across the world.

"Bigfoot has come to represent California's own meteoric growth as the premier storytelling capital of the world, capturing the hearts and imaginations of people from all backgrounds. The search for Bigfoot has generated unquantifiable growth in tourism in rural areas, particularly on the North Coast where Bigfoot has repeatedly been sighted. Naming Bigfoot as the official state cryptid of California will promote tourism for California's wilderness and rural communities, as well as education, appreciation, and cultural preservation of California's local folklore and cultural heritage."

- 2) Background. Northern California has a long history of alleged Bigfoot sightings. The famous Patterson-Gimlin film (1967), one of the most well-known pieces of supposed Bigfoot evidence, was filmed at Bluff Creek in Humboldt County. The region has a long history of Bigfoot lore, dating back to Indigenous stories. Native American tribes including the Hoopa and Yurok, have longstanding oral traditions about large, human-like creatures in the forests.

Towns like Willow Creek already brand themselves around Bigfoot, with museums, roadside attractions, and festivals. The annual Bigfoot Daze Festival in Willow Creek and numerous themed businesses demonstrate public interest. An official designation could further stimulate tourism.

California has designated more than 40 different state symbols, artifacts, and creatures. Although none have done so officially, other states have recognized cryptids or other iconic

mythical creatures. Examples include the Mothman in West Virginia, the Hodag in Wisconsin, New Jersey's Jersey Devil, and the Beast of Bladenboro in North Carolina. Given this precedent, adding Bigfoot as a state cryptid is consistent with California's approach to honoring cultural significance and celebrating unique folklore.

- 3) Arguments in opposition. According to the California Civil Liberties Advocacy, "We live in a time when conspiracy theories and pseudoscience threaten everything from public health to democratic stability. Instead of upholding the principles of rational governance, this bill signals that California's Legislature is willing to indulge in the same kind of post-truth nonsense that fuels climate change denial, anti-vaccine hysteria, and, yes, even wild conspiracies like chemtrails!"
- 4) Prior and related legislation:
 - a) AB 1797 (Wood), Chapter 667, Statutes of 2024, designated the Dungeness crab (*Metacarcinus magister*) as the official state crustacean.
 - b) AB 1850 (Pellerin), Chapter 668, Statutes of 2024, designated the banana slug (*Ariolimax*) as the official state slug.
 - c) AB 2504 (Dixon), Chapter 669, Statutes of 2024, designated the shell of the black abalone (*Haliotis cracherodii*) as the official state seashell.
 - d) AB 3118 (Wallis), of 2024, would have designated solar energy as the official state energy. Died in the Assembly Utilities and Energy committee.
 - e) AB 1769 (Voepel), of 2018, would have established the California Vaquero Horse as the official state horse. Died in the Assembly Governmental Organization Committee.
 - f) AB 2439 (Eduardo Garcia), Chapter 172, Statutes of 2018, established the LGBTQ Veterans Memorial at the Desert Memorial Park in Cathedral City as the official state LGBTQ veterans memorial.
 - g) AB 1067 (Gray), Chapter 49, Statutes of 2017, designated the almond (*Prunus dulcis*, *Prunus amygdalus*), walnut, pistachio, and pecan each as the official state nut.
 - h) AB 1540 (Bloom), Chapter 264, Statutes of 2017, designated the *Augustynolophus morrisi* as the official state dinosaur.
 - i) SB 73 (Hueso), of 2017, would have established the "San Salvador" as the official state ship of exploration. SB 73 died in the Senate Governmental Organization Committee.
 - j) AB 501 (Levine), Chapter 873, Statutes of 2016, designated denim as the official state fabric.
 - k) AB 1528 (Committee on Water, Parks, and Wildlife), Chapter 113, Statutes of 2015, among other things, designated "Lace Lichen" (*Ramalina menziesii*) as the official State Lichen.

- l) AB 2364 (V. Manuel Perez), Chapter 77, Statutes of 2014, designated the “California Red-Legged Frog” (*Rana draytonii*) as the official state amphibian.
- m) AB 1289 (Cooley), Chapter 191, Statutes of 2013, established the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial as the official state Vietnam veterans war memorial.
- n) AB 1776 (Fong), Chapter 591, Statutes of 2012< designated the Pacific Leatherback Sea Turtle as the official marine reptile of the State of California and established October 15 as Pacific Leatherback Sea Turtle Conservation Day.
- o) AB 2470 (Nielsen), of 2012, would have established the sculpture in the Norther California Veterans Cemetery as the official state memorial for Vietnam veterans. Died in the Assembly Veterans Affairs Committee.
- p) SB 1253 (Migden), of 2006, would have established zinfandel as the historic wine of California. Vetoed by the governor.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file.

Opposition

California Civil Liberties Advocacy

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