
THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 1359
Author: Ahrens (D), et al.
Amended: 8/13/26 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE: 11-0, 6/16/26

AYES: Umberg, Niello, Allen, Caballero, Durazo, Laird, Reyes, Stern,
Valladares, Wahab, Wiener

NO VOTE RECORDED: Ashby, Weber Pierson

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 8/13/26

AYES: Cervantes, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 73-1, 1/26/26 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Jury service exemptions

SOURCE: California Senior Legislature

DIGEST: This bill, starting January 1, 2028, streamlines and simplifies the process for a person 80 years of age or older to receive a permanent excuse from jury service.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Provides that no eligible person shall be exempt from service as a trial juror by reason of occupation, economic status, or any characteristic listed or defined in Section 11135 of the Government Code, or for any other reason. (Code of Civil Procedure (Civ. Proc.) § 204 (a).)
- 2) Provides that no person shall be excused from service as a trial juror except that an eligible person may be excused from jury service only for undue hardship,

upon themselves or upon the public, as defined by the Judicial Council. (Code Civ. Proc. § 204 (b).)

- 3) Provides that all persons are eligible and qualified to be prospective trial jurors, except the following:
- a) Persons who are not citizens of the United States.
 - b) Persons who are less than 18 years of age.
 - c) Persons who are not domiciliaries of the State of California, as specified.
 - d) Persons who are not residents of the jurisdiction wherein they are summoned to serve.
 - e) Persons who have been convicted of malfeasance in office and whose civil rights have not been restored.
 - f) Persons who are not possessed of sufficient knowledge of the English language, as specified.
 - g) Persons who are serving as a grand or trial juror in any court of this state.
 - h) Persons who are the subject of a conservatorship.
 - i) Persons while they are incarcerated in any prison or jail.
 - j) Persons who have been convicted of a felony and are currently on parole, postrelease community supervision, felony probation, or mandated supervision for the conviction of a felony.
 - k) Persons who are currently required to register as a sex offender pursuant to Section 290 of the Penal Code based on a felony conviction. (Code Civ. Proc. § 203.)

This bill:

- 1) Beginning January 1, 2028, specifies that an eligible person 80 years of age or older may seek a permanent excuse from jury service due to a medical impairment without providing a supporting letter, memorandum, or note from a treating health care provider.
- 2) Provides that a person 80 years of age or older who seeks a permanent excuse from jury service pursuant to 1) shall be permanently excused from jury service upon the jury commissioner's receipt of a written attestation stating that the person has an impairment, as specified.
- 3) Permits the Judicial Council to adopt or amend a rule of court and publish related judicial forms as necessary to implement the revised law.

Comments

According to the author:

Attaining a permanent exemption from jury service in California can be a challenging process for older adults. Currently, it requires arranging an appointment with a health care provider, obtaining a note that describes one's medical impairment, and submitting the exemption document to the court. This onerous process can induce stress, confusion, and potentially risk the physical and mental well-being of elderly individuals. Should a senior choose to attend jury duty, the hardships may be even greater. They may be forced to wake up earlier than normal, coordinate transportation to and from court, and experience disruptions in their daily routines.

By requiring Judicial Council to amend their Rules of Court, AB 1359 expedites the pathway to permanent exemption from jury service for individuals aged 80 or older. Specifically, it removes the burdensome requirement of requesting a note from a health care provider and acquiring approval from the jury commissioner. This will simplify the exemption process for senior citizens who are no longer fit to serve on a jury, reducing confusion and enhancing peace of mind.

Under current law, all persons are eligible and qualified to be prospective trial jurors, except in limited circumstances such as if a person is less than 18 years of age or is not a citizen of the United States, among other reasons. The law specifies that an eligible person cannot be exempt from service as a trial juror by reason of occupation, economic status, or any characteristic listed or defined in Section 11135 of the Government Code, or for any other reason. An eligible person may only be excused from jury service for undue hardship, upon themselves or upon the public, as defined by the Judicial Council.

Individuals may be excused from jury service if they have a physical or mental impairment that would cause undue hardship. If an individual is 70 years or older, they are not required to provide verification of impairment in order to be excused from jury service. However, that person remains in the jury pool and may be summoned in the future. Each time they are summoned they must again assert that they have a physical or mental impairment that would cause undue hardship. There is a mechanism by which an individual may be permanently excused from jury service for a medical reason. In order to receive the permanent excuse, the applicant must submit a written request for a permanent exemption to the jury commissioner and provide a supporting letter, memo, or note from a treating health

care provider. The provider must state that the individual has a permanent disability rendering the individual incapable of jury duty and sign off on official letterhead. The author notes that the “process of obtaining a doctor’s note and sending it to the jury commissioner can be burdensome and challenging for older individuals, who may struggle to confront the technological expertise and physical demands that are required for this process.”

This bill streamlines and simplifies the process for a person 80 years or older to receive a permanent excuse from jury service, beginning January 1, 2028.

The Retired Public Employees Association of California writes the following in support of this bill:

This measure provides a common-sense accommodation by allowing individuals 80 years of age and older to obtain a permanent excuse from jury service without requiring documentation from a health care provider.

Many older Californians face mobility, transportation, caregiving, or health-related challenges that make jury service difficult, even if they do not have a specific medical condition requiring a physician's note. The bill reduces unnecessary burdens on seniors, courts, and health care providers while preserving the ability of older Californians who wish to serve to continue participating in the jury system.

LeadingAge California explains the following in support of this bill:

As California’s population continues to age, it is critical that state policies reflect the needs and realities of older adults. Many individuals over the age of 80 experience mobility challenges, chronic health conditions, or caregiving responsibilities that can make repeated jury summons difficult or disruptive. While current rules allow for temporary excusals, they often require older adults to repeatedly navigate processes that can be confusing, time-consuming, and stressful.

AB 1359 provides a commonsense solution by establishing a clear, permanent exemption for individuals who voluntarily request it. This approach will reduce stress and administrative complexity for residents who are frequently called for jury duty despite ongoing limitations.

AB 1359 respects the dignity and autonomy of older Californians while reducing unnecessary strain on both individuals and their caregivers.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

Fiscal Impact: One-time significant costs to the Judicial Council (JC) for jury management system upgrades; minor, absorbable costs to create model summons that reflect the change in jury exemption policy.

Unknown, potentially moderate costs associated with mailing additional juror summons as responses to the exempted individuals are received.

Unknown, potentially significant reductions in staff time associated with processing fewer excusal requests on a case-by-case basis. Courts do not have juror demographic data in their jury management systems and the potential impact on juror rolls is unknown.

Minor, absorbable costs to adopt or revise a rule of court. Generally, one year is needed to complete the approval process and provide a public comment period (General Fund).

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/14/26)

California Senior Legislature (sponsor)

Alzheimer's Association

LeadingAge California

Retired Public Employees Association of California

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/14/26)

None received

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 73-1, 1/26/26

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, Elhawary, Ellis, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Michelle Rodriguez,

Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache,
Soria, Stefani, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas
NOES: DeMaio
NO VOTE RECORDED: Arambula, Dixon, Flora, Papan, Celeste Rodriguez, Ta

Prepared by: Margie Estrada / JUD. / (916) 651-4113
8/17/26 10:34:26

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