

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING
AB 1560 (Tangipa)
As Introduced January 8, 2026
2/3 vote

SUMMARY

Prohibits a person who has been convicted of a crime of public corruption from serving as a lobbyist.

Major Provisions

- 1) Prohibits a person who is convicted of a crime of public corruption from thereafter acting as a lobbyist pursuant to the Political Reform Act (PRA). Provides that if a person convicted of a crime of public corruption is already a registered lobbyist, the certification shall be void upon the person's conviction.
- 2) Provides, for the purposes of this bill, that a "crime of public corruption" means a person has been convicted of a felony involving accepting or giving, or offering to give, any bribe, the embezzlement of public money, extortion or theft of public money, perjury, or conspiracy to commit any of those crimes.
- 3) Prohibits the Secretary of State (SOS) from accepting a lobbying certification from a person who has been convicted of a crime of public corruption.
- 4) Requires a lobbyist certification to include a statement that the lobbyist has not been convicted of a crime of public corruption.

COMMENTS

Under the PRA, a lobbyist is an individual who is compensated to communicate directly with any elective state, state agency, or legislative official to influence legislative or administrative action on behalf of their employer or client. The PRA requires any person who qualifies as a lobbyist to register with the SOS and submit a lobbyist certification, as specified. Any lobbyist who violates these provisions may be subject to substantial fines and criminal penalties.

Elections Code Section 20 lists various types of felony convictions that prevent a person from being eligible to be elected to office. The disqualifying crimes are ones that are sometimes referred to as "public trust" crimes – that is, illegal acts that involve the breach of the ethical obligation that a public servant is expected to exercise their public responsibilities in a manner that prioritizes the public interest over private gain. Elections Code Section 20 is also, to some extent, an implementing statute for Article VII, Section 8 of the California Constitution, which provides in part "Laws shall be made to exclude persons convicted of bribery, perjury, forgery, malfeasance in office, or other high crimes from office or serving on juries."

Court cases relating to the interpretation of Article VII, Section 8 of the California Constitution pertaining to public officers and disqualification from holding office illustrate that same sentiment.

This bill applies this ethical standard to a lobbyist and prohibits a person convicted of a public trust crime from serving as a lobbyist. The author contends that a lobbyist plays a direct role in influencing public policy and allowing individuals convicted of public corruption to participate in that process undermines public trust. Conversely, one could argue that a lobbyist's role is distinctly different from a public official. As mentioned above, a public official is entrusted and expected to prioritize the broader public's interests. In contrast, a lobbyist is hired to advocate for the specific interests of their clients or certain groups. Additionally, a permanent ban could be considered unreasonable as it unfairly blocks career opportunities and may raise political speech first amendment concerns as it restricts who can lobby.

California voters passed an initiative, Proposition 9, in 1974 that created the Fair Political Practices Commission and codified significant restrictions and prohibitions on candidates, officeholders and lobbyists. That initiative is commonly known as the PRA. Amendments to the PRA that are not submitted to the voters, such as those contained in this bill, must further the purposes of the initiative and require a two-thirds vote of both houses of the Legislature.

Please see the policy committee analysis for a full discussion of this bill.

According to the Author

"California law already recognizes that certain crimes of public corruption, including offenses involving the misuse or theft of public funds, are serious enough to prevent someone from running for public office for life. Yet under current law, those same individuals can still register as lobbyists and be paid to influence the decisions of the Legislature. That double standard undermines public confidence in government.

"AB 1560 closes this loophole by prohibiting individuals convicted of public corruption from serving as lobbyists in California. The bill requires lobbyists to certify that they have not been convicted of such crimes and prevents the Secretary of State from accepting a lobbying certification from individuals who have abused the public trust."

Arguments in Support

In support, the County of Fresno, writes: "Over the years, our state has seen several high-profile cases in which individuals found guilty of public corruption-related charges continue working in an industry where public trust is essential. Allowing those facing such serious charges to lobby only encourages the problem. California cannot afford to let individuals with a record of unethical behavior influence policy and shape decisions that affect all Californians.

"AB 1560 is a straightforward, common-sense reform that protects the integrity of our government. By keeping those with corruption charges out of the lobbying process, this bill will help to restore public trust, promote fairness, and ensure that decisions are guided by the public interest, not what benefits individuals with questionable morals."

Arguments in Opposition

None received.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, the SOS anticipates one-time costs in the mid thousands of dollars (General Fund) associated with software modifications, and no ongoing costs.

VOTES

ASM ELECTIONS: 8-0-0

YES: Pellerin, Gallagher, Addis, Berman, Elhawary, Johnson, Solache, Stefani

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 13-0-2

YES: Wicks, Hoover, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

ABS, ABST OR NV: Muratsuchi, Pellerin

UPDATED

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