

Date of Hearing: April 22, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION

Blanca Rubio, Chair

AB 1578 (Jackson) – As Amended April 6, 2026

**SUBJECT:** State and local officials: sexual harassment training and education: anti-hate speech training.

**SUMMARY:** Requires local and state officials to complete training related to antihate speech. **Specifically, this bill:**

- 1) Requires, beginning on January 1, 2028, an employer that is a state agency or local agency to include anti-hate speech training as a component of the training and education required for sexual harassment for all elected state or local officials.
- 2) Provides that a state or local official who serves more than one state agency or local agency shall only be required to receive training once every two years without regard to the number of state agencies or local agencies the official serves.
- 3) States that if the Commission on State Mandates determines that this bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school district for those costs shall be made.
- 4) Makes technical and clarifying changes.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Requires each state agency to offer at least semiannually, and certain state officials to attend once every 2 years, an orientation course on the relevant ethics statutes and regulations that govern the official conduct of state officials.
- 2) Provides each state agency to maintain records indicating the specific attendees, each attendee's job title, and dates of their attendance for each orientation course offered for a period of not less than 5 years after each course is given.
- 3) Requires local agency officials, as defined, to receive sexual harassment prevention training and education if the local agency provides any type of compensation, salary, or stipend to those officials. Provides an entity that develops curricula to satisfy this requirement to consult with the city attorney or county counsel regarding the sufficiency and accuracy of that proposed content.
- 4) Provides that a local agency that requires its officials to complete the sexual harassment prevention training and education to maintain records related to the training, as specified.
- 5) Requires an employer having five or more employees to provide at least two hours of classroom or other effective interactive training and education regarding sexual harassment to all supervisory employees and at least one hour of classroom or other effective interactive training and education regarding sexual harassment to all nonsupervisory employees in California once every two years. (Gov. Code 12950.1(a)(1)).

6) Requires the training to also include practical examples aimed at instructing supervisors in the prevention of harassment, discrimination, and retaliation, and to be presented by trainers or educators with knowledge and expertise in the prevention of harassment, discrimination, and retaliation. (Gov. Code 12950.1(a)(1)).

7) Requires the training to be inclusive of harassment based on gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation. Requires the employer to also include prevention of abusive conduct as a component of the training. (Gov. Code 12950.1(a)(3)).

8) Defines “abusive conduct” to mean conduct of an employer or employee in the workplace, with malice, that a reasonable person would find hostile, offensive, and unrelated to an employer’s legitimate business interests. Abusive conduct may include repeated infliction of verbal abuse, such as the use of derogatory remarks, insults, and epithets, verbal or physical conduct that a reasonable person would find threatening, intimidating, or humiliating, or the gratuitous sabotage or undermining of a person’s work performance. A single act shall not constitute abusive conduct, unless especially severe and egregious. (Gov. Code 12950.1(h)(2)).

9) Defines a hate crime as a criminal act committed, in whole or in part, due to the actual or perceived characteristics of the victim. These characteristics include disability, gender, nationality, race/ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or association with someone with these traits. (PEN § 422.55)

**FISCAL EFFECT:** This bill is keyed fiscal by Legislative Counsel.

**COMMENTS:**

Purpose of the bill. According to the author, “AB 1578 would require elected local and state officials to take 1 hour of anti-hate speech training every 4 years. This bill recognizes what too many Californians already know. Hate is not abstract. It shapes when people are safe, where they work, and how they move through their own communities. Hate speech from elected officials is the primary impetus of hate crimes. This bill takes the findings of the Commission on the State of Hate and turns them into action. We cannot claim to value equality while ignoring the systems that allow hate to persist. AB 1578 demands that our state respond with clarity, data, and the courage to tell the truth about who is harmed and why. Justice begins with naming harm and building structures that prevent it.”

What problem does this bill solve? According to information provided by the author’s office, this past year reported hate crimes in some of California’s largest cities rose sharply. This continues a troubling trend of substantial year-over-year increases in reported hate crimes in California since 2020, including a 20% rise from 2021 to 2022.

The increase in hate violence is happening within a broader political context where it is not uncommon for political leaders and public officials often espouse hateful rhetoric and ideologies, which harm many communities in California through further marginalization, decreased feelings of safety, and the incitement of violence. This includes pitting one group against another and advocating for policies that would harm communities especially vulnerable to hate; attacks on inclusive educational curricula; attacks on efforts promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion; and bans on lifesaving gender affirming care for transgender and gender-expansive youth.

Hate-based rhetoric from political leaders can embolden others to express and act on their prejudices.<sup>1</sup> They can also promote and shape norms that shift behavior. Conversely, there is also evidence that messages from political leaders can pacify violent attitudes.<sup>2</sup>

**Background.**

This bill would require, beginning on January 1, 2028, an employer that is a state agency or local agency to include anti-hate speech training as a component of the training and education required for sexual harassment for all elected state or local officials. This bill also provides that a state or local official who serves more than one state or local agency must only complete the specified training once every two years without regard to the number of state agencies or local agencies the official serves.

Commission on the State of Hate. The Commission on the State of Hate (Commission) was established by AB 1126 (Bloom), Chapter 712, Statutes of 2021, at the Civil Rights Department (CRD) to assist the State of California with monitoring, preventing, and responding to hate. The Commission has three primary strategic goals:

- a) Provide a comprehensive accounting of hate activity in California.
- b) Develop recommendations for enhancing the resources and support for people and communities affected by hate.
- c) Develop recommendations for reducing hate crimes.

According to the Commission's 2024-2025 Annual Report, "To identify key patterns and trends in hate in California, the Commission synthesized various sources, including unprecedented, publicly available data on Californians' experiences with hate – the 2023 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) dataset. Our findings from the CHIS data set include:

- a) An estimated 8% of Californians over the age of 12 (nearly 2.6 million people) experienced at least one act of hate within a one-year period between 2022 and 2023.
- b) An estimated 15% of Californians (nearly 5 million people) witnessed an act of hate within the same period.
- c) Teens in California were more than twice as likely to experience hate than adults.
- d) Nearly 80% of teen victims of hate in California experienced hate at school.
- e) Nearly half (45%) of adult victims of hate in California experienced hate on a street or sidewalk, and more than one in three (34%) experienced hate at a business within the past

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<sup>1</sup> Stop AAPI Hate. (2022, October). The blame game: How political rhetoric inflames anti-Asian scapegoating. <https://stopaapihate.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Stop-AAPI-Hate-Scapegoating-Report.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Kalmoe, N. P., & Mason, L. (2022). Radical American partisanship: Mapping violent hostility, its causes, and the consequences for democracy. University of Chicago Press. <https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/R/bo163195227.html>

year.

- f) Only about 0.3% of adults and 0.1% of adolescents who experienced hate-motivated physical violence or property damage are recorded in law enforcement data in California.”

The report also describes the impact of hate on different groups and communities across the state. The 2023-2024 Annual Report made a number of recommendations, including recommendations for addressing hate against public officials and at public meetings. The recommendation stated, “Elected officials often undergo training after being sworn in or appointed. But this training does not always include information about how to address threats, harassment, and hate. Training and onboarding for officials should be expanded to include this. Training could range from helping officials prepare for the possibility of threats and harassment to information about how to respond to these incidents. Training could also consist of de-escalation training for use both during and outside of public meetings. Security and staff could also participate in de-escalation training.”

Current training requirements for local officials. The California Constitution, and state law, including the Ralph M. Brown Act and the Political Reform Act, establish standards for the operations of the legislative bodies of local agencies. The Ralph M. Brown Act requires that legislative bodies of local agencies meet, deliberate, and vote in open session, with specified exceptions. The Political Reform Act prohibits local officials from participating in decisions which affect their material interests and establishes disclosure requirements.

In 2005, the Legislature enacted AB 1234 (Salinas), Chapter 700, Statutes of 2005, to require members of local agencies’ legislative bodies to participate in ethics training, if those agencies offer compensation or expense reimbursement to their board members. AB 1234 required local agency officials to receive at least two hours of training in general ethics principles and ethics laws relevant to the official’s public service every two years. Local agencies must maintain records on the dates where local officials satisfied the training requirement and the entity that provided the training for at least five years. Such training is required to include, but is not limited to, the following information:

- a) Laws relating to personal financial gain by public servants, including, but not limited to, laws prohibiting bribery and conflict-of-interest laws.
- b) Laws relating to claiming prerequisites of office, including, but not limited to, gift and travel restrictions, prohibitions against the use of public resources for personal or political purposes, prohibitions against gifts of public funds, mass mailing restrictions, and prohibitions against acceptance of free or discounted transportation by transportation companies.
- c) Government transparency laws, including, but not limited to, financial interest disclosure requirements and open government laws.
- d) Laws relating to fair processes, including, but not limited to, common law bias prohibitions, due process requirements, incompatible offices, competitive bidding requirements for public contracts, and disqualification from participating in decisions affecting family members.

AB 1661 (McCarty & Gonzalez), Chapter 816, Statutes of 2016, additionally required local agency officials to receive two hours of sexual harassment prevention training and education within the first six months of taking office or commencing employment, and every two years thereafter. The requirements of the bill apply only if a local agency provides any type of compensation, salary, or stipend to its local agency officials. AB 1661's requirements apply to any member of a legislative body and any elected official of cities and counties (including charter cities and charter counties), and special districts.

SB 827 (Gonzalez), Chapter 661, Statutes of 2025, added certain department heads or other similar administrative officers to the list of local officials that must complete the ethics training. SB 827 also required certain local agency officials to receive at least two hours of fiscal and financial training at least once every two years. The fiscal and financial training must include:

- a) Laws and principles relating to financial administration and short- and long-term fiscal management, including, but not limited to, the role and responsibilities of financial administration, financial policies, municipal budgets and budget processes and financial reporting and auditing.
- b) Laws and principles relating to, but not limited to, capital financing and debt management, mechanisms for local agency revenues, pension and other postemployment benefits, cash management and investments, the prudent investor standard, and the ethics of safeguarding public resources.
- c) General fiscal and financial planning principles and any pertinent laws relevant to the local agency official's public service and role in overseeing the local agency's operation and relevant to the local agency's procurement and contracting practices and responsibilities.

Current training requirements for elected state officials. California law requires elected state officials to complete an ethics training course within six months of being hired. For ongoing service, an elected official must complete the course once during each two-year period. The two-year period begins with an odd-numbered year, for example, 2017-18, 2019-20, etc. To help state officials meet this requirement, the Attorney General's Office and the Fair Political Practices Commission have developed the State Officials - Ethics Training Course. All other required training (sexual harassment prevention, violence prevention, and harassment, discrimination and retaliation prevention) is required by internal rules or employment laws, not a single statewide statute aimed specifically at state elected officials (like members of the Legislature).

Double referral. This bill was dual referred to the Assembly Committee on Local Government, which heard and passed this bill (8-2) on April 15, 2026.

In support. Equality California writes, "Recent findings from the Commission on the State of Hate show that as many as 7% of California adults have experienced hate and 13% have witnessed it. These numbers are even higher for adolescents in the state, with 15% experiencing hate and 30% witnessing it. This rise in hate is occurring within a broader political climate where public officials increasingly use rhetoric that can reinforce harmful stereotypes and legitimize discrimination. Such rhetoric harms communities across California by further marginalizing individuals, undermining feelings of safety, and contributing to the conditions that can incite violence. Hate-based rhetoric from political leaders can embolden others to express and act on

their prejudices. Conversely, responsible and inclusive leadership can help de-escalate tensions and reduce harmful attitudes. The words of public officials are not merely expressions of opinion—they shape social norms, influence behavior, and impact people’s lived experiences. Recognizing and countering harmful rhetoric is essential to fostering a more inclusive and respectful California. This bill takes an important step by equipping leaders with the tools to understand and address the impact of their words.”

The California Legislative LGBTQ Caucus writes, “AB 1578 takes an important step to ensure that elected leaders are equipped with the tools to identify and address harmful rhetoric. AB 1578 strengthens California’s response to rising hate by requiring anti-hate speech training for elected officials, helping to promote accountability, awareness, and more inclusive leadership across all levels of government. By integrating this training into existing requirements, the bill ensures a practical and effective approach to addressing hate while reinforcing California’s commitment to equity and respect for all communities.”

In opposition. The California Family Council writes, “under AB 1578, state and local officials would be required to complete ‘anti-hate speech’ training without a clear statutory definition of the term. This ambiguity is troubling because it leaves the meaning of ‘hate speech’ open to interpretation by outside consultants or advocacy groups who may design and administer these training programs. Without clear limits, lawful and constitutionally protected viewpoints, especially religious or moral beliefs, could easily be mislabeled as ‘hate.’ This bill risks weaponizing government training against people of faith and other ideological minorities. Mandatory ideological training that frames certain viewpoints, particularly traditional religious beliefs about marriage, sexuality, or gender, as inherently hateful would stigmatize these individuals and undermine the pluralism that our constitutional system is designed to protect. Lastly, this bill opens the door to compelled ideological instruction. The bill provides no meaningful guidance regarding who will design the training curriculum or what standards will govern it. As a result, the content will likely be shaped by outside advocacy organizations with particular political perspectives.”

Related legislation. AB 1803 (Lowenthal) of 2026. This bill would add to the sexual harassment and abusive conduct training requirement for employers of five or more employees, a component on anti-hate speech. (Assembly Appropriations Committee)

Prior legislation. SB 48 (Gonzalez), Chapter 429, Statutes of 2025. Required the Office of Civil Rights to employ a Religious Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, a Race and Ethnicity Discrimination Coordinator, a Gender Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, and an LGBTQ Discrimination Prevention Coordinator.

SB 827 (Gonzalez), Chapter 661, Statutes of 2025. Modified existing ethics training requirements and added a new ethical, fiscal, and financial training requirement for local officials.

SB 778 (Committee on Labor, Public Employment and Retirement), Statutes of 2019, Chapter 215. Extended the deadline for specified employers to provide sexual harassment prevention training and education, clarifies when such training and education must be provided to new employees, and outlines when refresher training must be provided.

SB 1343 (Mitchell), Statutes of 2018, Chapter 956. Reduced the sexual harassment training requirement threshold from employers with 50 or more employees to employers with five or more employees, include non-supervisory employees in the training, and requires that the Department of Fair Employment and Housing develop an online training course and make it available on the Department's website.

AB 1661 (McCarty & Gonzalez), Chapter 816, Statutes of 2016. Required local agency officials to receive sexual harassment prevention training and education.

AB 2053 (Gonzalez), Statutes of 2014, Chapter 306. Expanded on existing sexual harassment training for supervisory employees to also include training on the prevention of abusive conduct.

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

**Support**

Alameda County Office of Education  
California Legislative LGBTQ Caucus  
Chinese for Affirmative Action  
Equality California

**Oppose**

California Baptist for Biblical Values  
California Family Council  
California Teachers Supporting Gender-nonconforming Youth  
CAUSE: Californians United for Sex-based Evidence in Policy and Law  
Democrats for an Informed Approach to Gender  
Lesbians Advocating for a Resilient Future  
LGB (Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual) Alliance Foundation  
Our Duty  
Pacific Justice Institute  
Women are Real

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