

Date of Hearing: May 6, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

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

Policy Committee:	Local Government	Vote:	8 - 2
	Governmental Organization		16 - 5

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: Yes Reimbursable: Yes

SUMMARY:

This bill adds anti-hate speech training as a component of the existing sexual harassment training a state or local agency employer must provide to all elected state and local officials.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Requires, beginning 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 is required to receive training only once every two years without regard to the number of state agencies or local agencies the official serves.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) One-time General Fund (GF) costs of an absorbable amount to the Civil Rights Department (CRD) in staff workload to update required harassment training course content, related website resources (such as a fact sheet, poster, and frequently asked questions for employers and employees), and regulations. Additionally, one-time costs of approximately \$35,000 to CRD in vendor contract payments to translate the updated training content into five languages, including the creation of voice files and related website resources.
- 2) Costs of an unknown, but potentially absorbable amount, across the state as an employer, to the extent a state agency must update its sexual harassment training program to include an anti-hate speech training component for elected officials (General Fund or special fund).
- 3) Costs to affected local agencies of an unknown amount, potentially in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars statewide, to the extent a local agency must update its sexual harassment training program to include an anti-hate speech training component for elected officials. These costs are likely reimbursable by the state General Fund (GF), subject to a determination by the Commission on State Mandates.

Based on prior commission findings, the mandate does not likely apply to training provision but likely applies to other eligible administrative expenses incurred by local entities. Reimbursement would be available to only general law counties and certain special districts subject to specified provisions of the California Constitution and required by state law to reimburse the expenses of members of their legislative bodies. Most other local agencies,

including cities, are not required by law to provide compensation or reimbursement or do not receive property tax, and therefore, are not eligible for state reimbursement under this bill.

The Legislative Analyst's Office recently warned of General Fund structural deficits of around \$35 billion per year in the 2027-28 fiscal year and ongoing.

COMMENTS:

1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

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. [This bill] 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.

2) **Background. *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. 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 (such as members of the Legislature).

Training Requirements for Elected Local Officials. Existing law requires members of local agencies' legislative bodies to participate in ethics training, if those agencies offer compensation or expense reimbursement to their board members. Local agency officials must receive at least two hours of training in general ethics principles and ethics laws relevant to the official's public service every two years. Existing law additionally requires 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, if a local agency provides compensation, salary, or stipend to its local agency officials. These requirements apply to any member of a legislative body and any elected official of a city (including a charter city), county, or special district.

This bill requires an employer that is a state agency or local agency to include anti-hate speech training as a component of the sexual harassment training required for all elected state or local officials.

3) **Support and Opposition.** This bill is supported by the Alameda County Office of Education and civil rights groups, with the Equality California arguing, "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.”

This bill is opposed by groups citing First Amendment concerns, with the California Family Council arguing this bill, “raises serious concerns about free speech, religious liberty, and the potential for ideological coercion within government.”

- 4) **Related Legislation.** AB 1803 (Lowenthal), of this legislative session, adds a component of anti-speech to the sexual harassment and abusive conduct training requirement for employers of five or more employees. AB 1803 is pending on the Assembly Floor.

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