
SENATE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Senator María Elena Durazo, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

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Fiscal: Yes
Consultant: Vargas

STATE AND LOCAL OFFICIALS: SEXUAL HARASSMENT TRAINING AND EDUCATION: ANTI-HATE SPEECH TRAINING

Requires local and state officials to complete training and education related to anti-hate speech.

Background

Trainings for local agencies officials. In 2005, the Legislature enacted AB 1234 (Salinas) 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. The local officials who must complete the training include:

- A member of a legislative body or an elected official of the local agency who receives any compensation, salary, stipend, or reimbursement for actual and necessary expenses;
- An employee the local agency's governing body designates to receive the training; and
- A member of the governing body of a school district, county board of education, or charter school, regardless of whether they receive compensation.

The training must cover laws related to:

- Personal financial gain, bribery, and conflict of interests;
- Claiming perks of office, such as gifts and use of public resources for personal purposes;
- Government transparency; and
- Ensuring fair processes, such as due process and incompatible offices.

Local officials must complete the training within one year of their start date and repeat the training every two years. Local agencies must maintain records on the date each local official satisfied the training requirement and the entity that provided the training for at least five years.

In 2016, the Legislature enacted AB 1661 (McCarty) to require local agency officials that receive compensation to receive two hours of sexual harassment prevention training and education within the first six months of taking office, commencing employment, and every two years thereafter. This training and education must include information and practical guidance on federal and state sexual harassment policies, including practical examples to instruct local agency officials on preventing sexual harassment.

Commission on the State of Hate. AB 1126 (Bloom, 2021) established the Commission on the State of Hate (Commission) to help the state monitor, prevent, and respond to hate. The Commission issues an Annual State of Hate Commission report to the Governor, the Legislature, and the public to help provide resources and assistance, engage in fact finding and data

collection, and collaborate with other subject-matter experts in the fields of hate and public safety to assess trends relating to the state of hate or hate-related crimes. So far the Commission has completed three reports. According to the Commission's 2024-2025 Annual Report, "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 and an estimated 15% of Californians (nearly 5 million people) witnessed an act of hate within the same period."

The 2023-2024 Annual Report also states, "There is a growing body of evidence documenting escalating attacks, violence, threats, harassment, and hate against public officials....A 2021 survey found that 81% of local public officials reported experiencing harassment, threats, and violence." The Commission made a number of recommendations in their report, including, "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. Trainings 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."

Following the recommendation of the Commission, the author wants elected officials to recognize the implications of hate speech on democracy and civil rights.

Proposed Law

Assembly Bill 1578 requires, starting January 1, 2028, an employer that is a state or local agency, to include anti-hate speech training as a component of the sexual harassment prevention training and education for elected officials.

AB 1578 states the anti-hate speech training must provide practical guidance on recognizing, reporting, engaging or participating in, and confronting speech that vilifies, humiliates, or incites hatred against people based on the protected characteristics of: race, religious creed, color, national origin, ancestry, physical disability, mental disability, reproductive health decisionmaking, medical condition, genetic information, marital status, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, age, sexual orientation, or veteran or military status.

AB 1578 specifies that if a state or local official serves more than one state or local agency, the elected official must only receive training once every two years without regard to the number of state or local agencies they serve.

Comments

1. Purpose of the bill. According to the author, "AB 1578 would require elected local and state officials to take anti-hate speech training as component of their sexual harassment training. 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."

2. One training, two goals. Local agencies are subject to a wide variety of laws to ensure that local officials execute their duties without conflict or unseemly behavior. To assist local officials in complying with these requirements and carrying out their responsibilities effectively, state law requires a number of trainings, including: ethics, sexual harassment, and most recently, a fiscal and financial management training. AB 1578 incorporates anti-hate speech education into the existing two-hour sexual harassment prevention training required every two years. Sexual harassment training is generally focused on promoting respectful workplace interactions, bystander intervention, and fostering environments free from intimidation and hostility. Anti-hate speech education often addresses broader issues of bias, prejudice, civic discourse, and discrimination based on a wider range of protected characteristics. Both seek to promote respectful workplace interactions, discourage conduct that may contribute to hostile environments, and encourage professional behavior by local officials. However, combining the two subjects into a single training program may reduce the time and attention devoted to each topic and create uncertainty regarding the specific competencies of the trainings.

3. Mandate. The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local governments for the costs of new or expanded state mandated local programs. Because AB 1578 imposes new duties on local governments, Legislative Counsel says it imposes a new state mandate. The measure states that if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill imposes a reimbursable mandate, then reimbursement must be made pursuant to existing statutory provisions.

4. Coming and going. The Senate Rules Committee has ordered a double referral of AB 1578: first to the Committee on Local Government to consider its impact on local agencies, and second to the Committee on Governmental Organization.

Assembly Actions

Assembly Local Government Committee:	8-2
Assembly Governmental Organization Committee:	16-5
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	11-4
Assembly Floor:	58-18

Support and Opposition (6/12/2026)

Support: Alameda County Office of Education
 California Legislative Lgbtq Caucus
 Chinese for Affirmative Action
 Fresno Unified School District
 Los Angeles Lgbtq Chamber of Commerce

Opposition: California Baptist for Biblical Values
 California Family Council
 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
 The California Baptist Capitol Ministry