

Date of Hearing: May 6, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 1588 (Stefani) – As Amended April 16, 2026

Policy Committee:	Public Safety	Vote:	9 - 0
	Transportation		15 - 0

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

SUMMARY:

This bill expands the definition of a sideshow and creates several new penalties for participation in a sideshow.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Modifies the definition of a sideshow in existing law so that the term means:
 - an event or gathering in which two or more persons barricade, block, impede, or otherwise obstruct traffic upon or access to a highway or in an off-street parking facility without the consent of the owner, operator, or agent thereof, for the purpose of performing motor vehicle stunts, motor vehicle speed contests, motor vehicle exhibitions of speed, or reckless driving and that may involve the use or operation of any motor vehicle, including, but not limited to, motorcycles or off-highway motor vehicles, regardless of whether or not those vehicles display license plates or are registered.

- 2) Establishes several new penalties applicable to a person who is convicted of engaging in an exhibition of speed, where the violation occurred as part of a sideshow, including convictions for which the driver proximately causes bodily injury to a person other than the driver; penalties range from 24 hours in county jail and fines of \$500, or both, to imprisonment in state prison or county jail for up to one year and up to \$1,000 in fines, with the more severe punishments prescribed against a person convicted of an offense within five years of the date of a prior offense.

FISCAL EFFECT:

Cost pressures (Trial Court Trust Fund, General Fund) of an unknown but potentially significant amount to the courts to adjudicate criminal enforcement actions authorized by this bill. Actual costs will depend on the number of cases filed and the amount of court time needed to resolve each case. It generally costs approximately \$1,000 to operate a courtroom for one hour. Although courts are not funded on the basis of workload, increased pressure on the Trial Court Trust Fund may create a demand for increased funding for courts from the General Fund. The state budget provides an annual General Fund backfill to the Trial Court Trust Fund to offset ongoing declining revenue. This backfill was \$37.3 million in 2024-25.

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

COMMENTS:

Very generally, a sideshow is, according to state law, an event in which two or more persons block or impede traffic on a highway or in an offstreet parking facility for the purpose of performing motor vehicle stunts, motor vehicle speed contests, motor vehicle exhibitions of speed, or reckless driving, for spectators. State law also refers to sideshows by the more ominous term "street takeover."

CHP reports an increase in complaints regarding sideshows since 2021. In response, both state and local law enforcement have tried to prevent the occurrence of sideshows and the more troublesome behaviors that sometimes accompany them by, among other things, expanding the authority of law enforcement to impound a vehicle for participating in a side show or for blocking a highway for purposes of facilitating what the law terms a "speed contest" or for engaging in an "exhibition of speed" and generally increasing penalties for participating in such events.

The author contends that, nonetheless, sideshows "have grown into highly organized and increasingly dangerous events that threaten the safety of communities across the state." According to the author:

These sideshow events frequently involve blocked intersections, reckless stunts, and the presence of firearms. They endanger not only participants, but also innocent bystanders, other motorists, first responders, and in some cases have resulted in the deaths of spectators. AB 1588 closes important gaps in the law and increases penalties for repeat offenders and those who cause injury to spectators. By equipping law enforcement with stronger tools to identify, apprehend, and hold participants accountable, AB 1588 aims to deter dangerous behavior, curb sideshow activity, and enhance safety for communities, motorists, and first responders alike.

Law enforcement agrees, as do many local governments and their representatives. According to a coalition of law enforcement agencies, AB 1588 "will help keep our streets and highways safer by ensuring that those who would endanger our communities are appropriately held accountable."

A number of organizations expressed opposition to an earlier version of this bill. For example, the California Public Defenders Association described a prior version of the bill and the punishments it created as "harsh" and "ineffective." However, the California Public Defenders Association, and several other organizations that had opposed the bill, submitted letters to formally withdraw their opposition to the bill. It is not clear if other entities that had expressed opposition to prior versions of the bill remain opposed to it.

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