

Date of Hearing: March 10, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
Ash Kalra, Chair
AB 1597 (Castillo) – As Introduced January 16, 2026

PROPOSED CONSENT

SUBJECT: NOTARY PUBLIC: SERVICE FEES

KEY ISSUE: SHOULD THE MAXIMUM NOTARY SERVICE FEE, WHICH HAS NOT CHANGED SINCE 2016, BE INCREASED TO REFLECT INFLATION?

SYNOPSIS

Existing law authorizes the Secretary of State to appoint and commission notaries public, in numbers deemed necessary for public convenience, and prohibits a notary public from charging fees that exceed certain amounts for specified services. The maximum fees were last changed in 2016, and according to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) prices for goods and services have increased, on average, about 34% over the past decade. This bill would raise the maximum fee for each category of service by \$5. As discussed in the analysis, this is consistent with the CPI.

This bill is sponsored by the California League of Independent Notaries and supported by the major national associations of notaries public, as well as several individual notaries public and associated professionals. There is no registered opposition.

SUMMARY: Increases the maximum fee that a notary public may charge for various services. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Increases the fees for specified notary services as follows:
 - a) For taking an acknowledgment or proof of a deed, or other instrument, to include the seal and the writing of the certificate, from \$15 to \$20 for each signature taken.
 - b) For administering an oath or affirmation to one person and executing the jurat, including the seal, from \$15 to \$20.
 - c) For services rendered in connection with deposition services, from \$30 to \$35, and related thereto, from \$7 to \$12 for administering the oath to the witness and from \$7 to \$12 for the certificate to the deposition.
 - d) For certifying the power of attorney under the Probate Code from \$15 to \$20.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Authorizes the Secretary of State to appoint and commission notaries public in the number deemed necessary for the public convenience and establishes minimum requirements that a person must meet to serve as a notary public. (Government Code Sections 8200 *et seq.*)
- 2) Provides that fees charged by a notary public shall not exceed the following:

- a) For taking an acknowledgment or proof of a deed, or other instrument, to include the seal and the writing of the certificate, the sum of \$15 for each signature taken.
- b) For administering an oath or affirmation to one person and executing the jurat, including the seal, the sum of \$15.
- c) For all services rendered in connection with the taking of any deposition, the sum of \$30, and in addition thereto, the sum of \$7 for administering the oath to the witness and the sum of \$7 for the certificate to the deposition.
- d) No fee may be charged to notarize signatures on vote by mail ballot identification envelopes or other voting materials.
- e) For certifying a copy of a power of attorney under Section 4307 of the Probate Code the sum of \$15.
- f) No fee may be charged to a United States military veteran for notarization of an application or a claim for a pension, allotment, allowance, compensation, insurance, or any other veteran's benefit. (Government Code Section 8211.)

FISCAL EFFECT: As currently in print this bill is keyed non-fiscal.

COMMENTS: According to the author, notaries public “are California’s frontline safeguard against financial fraud and abuse, supporting critical transactions ranging from housing and healthcare to estate planning and business activities. However, the statutory fee cap governing notarial services has remained unchanged since January 1, 2017, while the cost of living has increased more than 30 percent. . . The purpose of this bill is to modernize California’s notary fee schedule to ensure continued access to reliable, professional, and widely available notarial services throughout the state.”

Notary Public Fees. A notary public plays a key role in our legal system by serving as an impartial witness to the signing of legal documents, thereby ensuring the authenticity of the signature and safeguarding against fraud or coercion. In California, the Secretary of State issues notary commissions – in numbers based on need – and ensures the qualifications and integrity of the persons granted a commission. According to the sponsor, the California League of Independent Notaries, the number of notaries operating in the state has decreased by 22,000 since 2017, and some of this decrease may reflect the lack of appropriate remuneration of the services rendered. The author notes that this decline especially impacts rural communities and geographically isolated areas that require extensive travel.

Existing law establishes maximum fees that notaries public may charge for each type of service provided. Specifically, Government Code Section 8011 establishes maximum fee amounts that fall into one of three amounts: \$7, \$15, and \$30. For example, a notary public cannot charge more than \$7 for taking an oath, more than \$15 for certifying an acknowledgement for proof of deed, or more than \$30 for services rendered in connection with the taking of a deposition. The original fee structure was established in 1993 and raised to current levels in 2016. This bill seeks to raise the fees once more to account for inflation over the past decade.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index (CPI) Calculator, on average, the price of goods and services have increased by about 34% since 2016. Although

today's rate of inflation is relatively low, the rate increased considerably during the Covid epidemic, accounting for much of the increase that occurred between 2016 and 2026. Applying the CPI Calculator to the maximum fee levels for notary services, the \$7 fee in 2016 dollars would equal \$9.68 in 2026 dollars; the \$15 fee would rise to \$20.09, and the \$30 fee would rise to \$40.18. If the author wished to hew more exactly to the CPI, the bill could, rounding off, raise the \$7 fee to \$10, the \$15 to \$20, and the \$30 fee to \$40. Rather than raise each fee to these amounts, the author, for simplicity's sake, proposes raising each fee by \$5. Raising the lowest fee from \$7 to \$12 slightly exceeds the CPI; raising the \$15 fee to \$20 corresponds almost exactly to the CPI; and raising the \$30 fee to \$35 is less than what the CPI would justify. Taken together, however, the \$5 increase for each fee reasonably reflects the rate of inflation.

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: The California League of Independent Notaries (CLIN), the bill's sponsor, writes in support:

AB 1597 provides a measured modernization of the statutory notary fee caps set forth in Government Code 8211, which have remained unchanged since January 1, 2017. During that time, the cost of living in California has increased by more than 30 percent, while notarial fee limits have remained static.

Notaries serve as frontline safeguards against fraud and abuse, performing legally required acts that underpin real estate transactions, powers of attorney, advance health care directives, court filings, business agreements, and numerous other essential legal transactions. When notarial services are unavailable or inaccessible, Californians experience delays in exercising basic legal and economic rights.

Under Government Code 8200, the Secretary of State is charged with appointing and commissioning notaries public in such number as deemed necessary for the public convenience. That statutory mandate cannot be effectively fulfilled if the economic structure governing notarial services discourages participation and undermines sustainability of the notary workforce.

In recent years, California has experienced a decline of more than 22,000 active notaries public. This contraction in the notary workforce has materially restricted service availability, particularly in rural communities, geographically dispersed regions, and areas requiring significant travel. . . . At its core, AB 1597 is about maintaining access to an essential public function. A sustainable notary workforce supports equitable participation in the legal and financial systems and ensures that Californians can execute the documents required to protect their property, health, and business interests.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California League of Independent Notaries (sponsor)

American Guild of Notaries Public

National Notary Association

Proof

Many Individuals

Opposition

None on file

Analysis Prepared by: Tom Clark / JUD. / (916) 319-2334