

Date of Hearing: April 15, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 1736 (Pellerin) – As Introduced February 5, 2026

Policy Committee: Elections Vote: 8 - 0

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

**SUMMARY:**

This bill prohibits a lobbyist employer from creating fictitious support or opposition for a legislative or administrative proposal, or sending a communication to a state official using the name of a fictitious person or a real person without consent.

Specifically, this bill extends the existing prohibition under the Political Reform Act (PRA) against fictitious communications by a lobbyist or lobbying firm to additionally apply to a lobbyist employer.

**FISCAL EFFECT:**

Minor and absorbable costs to the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC).

**COMMENTS:**

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

As public officials, we often make decisions based on the outreach from constituents. But what if the hundreds of comments that we were receiving weren't from constituents, but from AI generated fictitious people? This is what AB 1736 is looking to fix. AB 1736 will extend already existing law from the [PRA], where lobbyists and lobbying firms cannot create fictitious characters to generate favor or disfavor of any proposed legislative, and apply that to organizations that employ lobbyists or lobbying firms as well.

This bill is sponsored by the FPPC and supported by a labor organization.

2) **Fictitious Lobbying.** In 2017, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) received a record 22 million public comments on a proposed rule governing internet service providers. An investigation by the New York Attorney General's Office found that over 8.5 million of those comments were submitted by contractors hired by the broadband industry to influence the proceeding, and that "nearly every comment and message the broadband industry submitted to the FCC and Congress was fake." The investigation also identified other large-scale abuses regarding the submission of comments and concluded that nearly 18 million of the 22 million comments received were fake.

The PRA prohibits a lobbyist or lobbying firm from creating fictitious positions on a legislative or administrative proposal, or sending a communication to a state official using the name of a fictitious person or a real person without consent. However, the PRA does not explicitly prohibit a lobbyist employer from engaging in such conduct. This bill extends the existing PRA prohibition against fictitious communications to a lobbyist employer.

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