

CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

AB 1738 (Carrillo)

As Amended July 2, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Requires certain cities, counties, or cities and counties (local jurisdictions) to offer remote virtual building inspections (RVIs) for certain residential projects in single- or two-family dwelling units.

Senate Amendments

- 1) Remove cities with a population of less than 5,000 and counties with a population of fewer than 150,000, including each city within that county, from the requirements of this bill.
- 2) Delays implementation of this bill until January 1, 2028 for jurisdictions with more than 50,000 people, and July 1, 2028 for jurisdictions with less than 50,000 people.
- 3) Remove the following scopes of work from the mandatory RVI provisions:
 - a) Accessory dwelling units (ADUs);
 - b) Minor residential electric work unrelated to residential heat pumps;
 - c) Minor residential plumbing work; and
 - d) Home hardening and defensible space, including improvements to comply with the California Wildland Urban Interface Code.
- 4) Add additional safeguards to RVIs related to residential heat pump water heaters, and residential heat pump heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning systems.
- 5) Provide that a contractor can only request an RVI with the written consent of the homeowner, unless the local agency requires an inspection to be performed remotely, in which case, the contractor shall disclose to the homeowner the local agency's requirement that the inspection be performed remotely.
- 6) Remove the provisions requiring optional RVIs at the request of the homeowner or contractor, and at the discretion of the construction inspector.
- 7) Give the construction inspector additional latitude to terminate an RVI and request the inspection be conducted in-person if the inspector cannot verify compliance with applicable codes or regulations via the RVI.
- 8) Provide that nothing in this bill shall be construed to prohibit a local agency from adopting or implementing RVIs in a manner more permissive, or allowing additional types of building permits to be inspected remotely.

COMMENTS

State Housing Law and Building Codes: State Housing Law establishes uniform statewide requirements for building standards and code enforcement to protect public health and safety. The California Building Standards Code, adopted and updated by the California Building Standards Commission (CBSC) on a three-year cycle, includes standards related to structural safety, fire protection, energy efficiency, and green building. Local jurisdictions are generally required to enforce these standards and may only adopt local modifications based on specified local conditions. In 2025, AB 130 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 22, Statutes of 2025, paused most new residential building standards until June 1, 2031, with limited exceptions for health and safety, wildfire, and climate-related updates.

Residential Construction Inspections: Local building departments are responsible for conducting inspections during construction to ensure compliance with approved plans, building codes, and safety requirements. Inspections occur throughout construction, from foundation and framing through final occupancy, and may include review of structural work, electrical and plumbing systems, fire safety measures, energy efficiency requirements, and accessibility standards.

In 2025, the Legislature enacted AB 1308 (Hoover), Chapter 509, Statutes of 2025, which requires local agencies to complete inspections within 10 business days for certain small residential projects and provides that failure to meet the deadline constitutes a violation of the Housing Accountability Act. Even with relatively quick inspection scheduling timeframes in certain jurisdictions, stakeholders note inefficiencies associated with scheduling inspections, coordinating onsite access, and contractor standby time while waiting for inspectors to arrive. Stakeholders also note that some smaller-scale projects or alterations may proceed without permits to avoid permitting, inspection, or scheduling requirements, resulting in work occurring outside the formal code enforcement and safety review process.

Remote Virtual Inspections (RVIs): RVIs allow building inspections to be conducted remotely using video, photographs, or similar technology rather than requiring the homeowner, contractor, and inspector to be physically present onsite. The inspection is conducted while a contractor, homeowner, or other representative is present at the jobsite and follows the inspector's directions, or by submitting recorded media for review. RVIs do not establish a different legal standard for inspections, but instead provide an alternative method for conducting inspections required under existing building and safety laws. National organizations, including the International Code Council (ICC) and National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), have issued guidance and best practices related to RVIs, including recommendations regarding permit verification, documentation, and technology standards. The ICC's guidance further provides that all inspections may qualify for an RVI, depending on the resources and policies of the local jurisdiction, although these materials are advisory and do not establish binding requirements.

While some jurisdictions had an RVI framework before the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of RVIs expanded during the pandemic as jurisdictions sought to maintain inspection services while limiting in-person contact. Today, approximately 19 California jurisdictions currently allow some form of remote inspection for limited scopes of work, including HVAC replacements, reroofs, solar installations, EV chargers, and certain plumbing or electrical work. More complex inspections involving structural work, foundations, framing, or detailed field verification are generally still conducted in person. Other states, including Florida, have similarly authorized RVIs for limited types of residential construction inspections.

This Bill: This bill requires certain jurisdictions in California to offer remote virtual inspections (RVIs) by either January or July 2028, based on population size, for specified residential permits related to single- and two-family dwellings. Required eligible inspection types include residential heat pump water systems, reroofs, photovoltaic systems with an alternating current nameplate rating less than or equal to 15 kilowatts, energy storage systems, and smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. This bill does not apply to cities with a population of less than 5,000, and counties (including the jurisdictions located within them) with a population of less than 150,000.

According to the Author

"Like many of you, I'm a homeowner, and have also experienced the frustration of waiting weeks for an inspection on a simple home renovation. Even once the inspection date is booked, a routine inspection that only takes 15 minutes can take hours, forcing homeowners to take a day off work and a day of lost pay. Even beyond the money lost from missing work, the cost of delaying these inspections can also cost hundreds if not thousands of dollars.

AB 1738 proposes an alternative to this, by giving homeowners the choice to request a remote virtual inspection for simple home renovations. These remote inspections are already happening throughout the state; 19 different jurisdictions already offer some form of remote inspections. This bill will require local jurisdictions to allow remote virtual inspections upon request for simple renovations. This is a simple, commonsense affordability measure that will help homeowners save time and money."

Arguments in Support

The bill sponsors, SPUR and Permit Power, write in support: "Remote inspections are already working across California. At least 19 jurisdictions, small and large—including Los Angeles County, San Diego, Santa Barbara, Berkeley, Santa Rosa, and Placer County—use RVIs for portions of their inspection workload. The county of Los Angeles estimates that 20-40% of all inspections conducted are done so remotely, most commonly for water heaters, solar/battery, electrical final, and minor plumbing and mechanical work. Jurisdictions report being able to conduct as many as 50% or more inspections per day after implementing RVIS. In the most populous county in California, that represents hundreds of thousands of inspections safely conducted for the last 7 years, without incident. Statewide and national authorities, including the International Code Council, HUD, and the National Fire Protection Association, have issued standards and best practices supporting their use. Other states, including Texas and Florida, have authorized or required remote inspections in statute.

Remote inspections significantly cut costs for building departments by slashing fuel, vehicle maintenance, and staffing expenses since inspectors can complete more inspections per day without driving between sites, reducing the need for overtime or additional hires. Local governments can implement this bill at no cost, with free platforms like Zoom and Facetime, with significant potential cost savings down the line."

Arguments in Opposition

The City of Beverly Hills writes in opposition: "While some jurisdictions found remote inspections useful during the COVID-19 pandemic, not all cities adopted this approach, and many others have since determined that in-person inspections remain the most effective way to ensure building code compliance and safety in their communities. AB 1738 would impose a statewide mandate regardless of local best practices, staffing capacity, technology infrastructure, geographic realities, or community preferences.

Cities must retain the flexibility to determine which inspection methods are most appropriate based on local conditions and the type of project being inspected. A one-size-fits-all mandate undermines local decision-making and will negatively impact the effectiveness of local building and safety programs."

FISCAL COMMENTS

This bill is keyed fiscal.

VOTES:

ASM HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: 12-0-0

YES: Haney, Patterson, Ávila Farías, Caloza, Garcia, Kalra, Lee, Quirk-Silva, Ta, Tangipa, Wicks, Wilson

ASM LOCAL GOVERNMENT: 10-0-0

YES: Carrillo, Ta, Johnson, Pacheco, Ramos, Ransom, Blanca Rubio, Stefani, Ward, Wilson

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-0

YES: Wicks, Hoover, Aguiar-Curry, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 62-0-18

YES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, Muratsuchi, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Michelle Rodriguez, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Tangipa, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

ABS, ABST OR NV: Arambula, Bauer-Kahan, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, Gabriel, Gallagher, Irwin, Jackson, McKinnor, Nguyen, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Rogers, Schiavo, Ta, Valencia

SENATE FLOOR: 29-6-5

YES: Allen, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Hurtado, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Pérez, Richardson, Rubio, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Umberg, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

NO: Alvarado-Gil, Jones, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Seyarto, Valladares

ABS, ABST OR NV: Choi, Grove, Padilla, Reyes, Strickland

UPDATED

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