

Date of Hearing: May 6, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 1921 (Ward) – As Amended April 6, 2026

Policy Committee:	Privacy and Consumer Protection	Vote:	10 - 4
	Judiciary		8 - 2

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

SUMMARY:

This bill, the Protect Our Games Act, requires a digital game operator to provide 60 days’ notice before ceasing services necessary for the ordinary use of a digital game and, upon cessation of services, to provide purchasers with a playable version of the game, a patch enabling continued use, or a full refund.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Exempts subscription-based services that offer access only for the duration of the subscription, digital games offered for no monetary consideration, and digital games for which the seller cannot revoke access after the transaction (such as games made available at the time of purchase for permanent offline download).
- 2) Authorizes enforcement exclusively through a civil action brought in the name of the people of the State of California by the Attorney General or any district attorney.
- 3) Applies only to digital games available for purchase on or after January 1, 2027.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) Possible costs (General Fund, special funds) to the Department of Justice (DOJ) of an unknown but potentially moderate amount. Actual costs will depend on whether the Attorney General pursues investigations and enforcement actions, and, if so, the level of additional staffing DOJ needs to handle the related workload. If DOJ hires staff to handle the work authorized by this bill, the department would incur significant costs, likely in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars annually at a minimum. If DOJ does not pursue investigation or enforcement as authorized by this bill, the DOJ would likely not incur any costs.
- 2) Cost pressures (Trial Court Trust Fund, General Fund) of an unknown but potentially moderate amount to the courts to adjudicate any additional filings. 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 annual General Fund backfills to the Trial Court Trust Fund to offset revenue reductions, totaling approximately \$117.3 million in 2025-26.

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

AB 1921 aims to protect video game users against unexpected shutdowns of their digital games. When a game operator stops supporting a live-service game server, that game becomes inoperable for users who purchased a license with the expectation of continual access. This bill requires user notifications before the end of server support and ensures that paid users walk away with either a playable version of the game or a refund once services cease. As consumers increasingly enjoy entertainment and engage in hobbies via digital goods, furthering digital consumer protection and transparency in this space is essential.

2) **Background.** Digital games are increasingly distributed under licensing arrangements rather than as physical products that confer ownership of a self-contained copy. AB 2426 (Irwin), Chapter 513, Statutes of 2024, requires sellers of digital goods to disclose to consumers that terms like “buy” and “purchase” confer a license rather than an unrestricted ownership interest, and that access to the digital good may be unilaterally revoked. This bill builds on that disclosure framework by requiring the digital game operator to provide notice and a remedy — a playable version, a patch, or a refund — when the operator ceases services necessary for the ordinary use of a game. The bill provides that actions for relief may be prosecuted exclusively in a civil action brought by the Attorney General or a district attorney.3) **Support and Opposition.** The bill is supported by Stop Killing Games and Consumer Reports. It is opposed by the Entertainment Software Association, which argues that the bill mischaracterizes digital ownership, that obsolescence is an inherent feature of modern software, and that statutory requirements to maintain playability indefinitely could conflict with third-party licensing terms. Opponents further contend that the expansive scope of the bill could increase enforcement costs.

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