

Date of Hearing: April 15, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 1950 (Harabedian) – As Amended March 18, 2026

Policy Committee: Judiciary

Vote: 12 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill authorizes the Superior Court of Los Angeles County to conduct a pilot program ordering any civil case into mediation regardless of the amount in controversy, notwithstanding the existing statewide \$75,000 cap.

FISCAL EFFECT:

Cost savings (Trial Court Trust Fund) of an unknown, but likely significant amount. Los Angeles Superior Court’s current Alternative Dispute Resolution program is a free three-hour session offered to eligible litigants and funded via base budget funds from its annual trial court budget allocation. The mediators in the program serve pro bono. The court estimates that 500 to 1,000 additional cases would be ordered to mediation if this bill were enacted. Based on historical trends, the court estimates that approximately 50% of those cases will settle, resulting in 250 to 500 fewer cases going to trial. The anticipated cost savings from judicial time and courtroom resources would be significant.

Nonetheless, consistent with the committee rules, this bill is a candidate for the committee’s suspense file because it has the primary purpose of creating a pilot program.

COMMENTS:

Civil filings in Los Angeles County have surged approximately 67% since 2022, and the existing \$75,000 mediation threshold leaves the majority of the court’s unlimited civil filings ineligible for court-ordered mediation. In 2025, AB 1523 (Committee on Judiciary), Chapter 201, increased the amount-in-controversy cap for court-ordered mediation from \$50,000 to \$75,000, effective January 1, 2027. The Superior Court of Los Angeles County — the largest trial court in the nation, processing nearly 294,000 combined civil filings in 2025 — contends that the \$75,000 threshold still excludes too many cases from mediation given the county’s case volume and higher cost of living.

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