

Date of Hearing: April 7, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT, SPORTS, AND TOURISM

Christopher M. Ward, Chair

AB 1954 (Ward) – As Amended March 17, 2026

SUBJECT: Municipal golf courses: reservations

SUMMARY: AB 1954, the Protecting Access to Reservations (PAR) Act, prohibits an operator of a third-party golf reservation service platform from listing, advertising, promoting, or selling reservations for a golf course owned by a local public agency without a written authorization from the golf course operator.

Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Prohibits an operator of a third-party golf reservation service platform from listing, advertising, promoting, or selling reservations for a golf course owned by a local public agency without a written authorization from the golf course operator. This written authorization does not extend to an affiliate website or other internet platform unless the written agreement explicitly provides that authority to that affiliate website or internet platform.
- 2) Defines a “Golf course” as a golf course as well as its accessory facilities and services that are owned by a local agency, including clubhouses, driving ranges, golf cart storage, locker and shower facilities, and sales facilities.
- 3) Defines a “Golf course operator” as either a local agency operating a golf course, or an entity operating a golf course through a contractual relationship with the local agency, including a license, lease, or management agreement
- 4) Defines a “Third-party golf reservation service platform” as a website, mobile application, or other internet platform that is owned or operated by an entity other than a golf course operator and that offers or arranges reservations for on-premises service for a customer at a golf course.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the Unfair Competition Law, which provides a statutory cause of action for any unlawful, unfair, or fraudulent business act or practice and unfair, deceptive, untrue, or misleading advertising, including over the internet. (Business and Profession Code (BPC) 17200)
- 2) Prohibits a person from using, without the consent of the registrant, any reproduction, counterfeit, copy, or colorable imitation of a mark registered under the Model State Trademark Law in connection with the sale, distribution, offering for sale, or advertising of goods or services if such use is likely to cause confusion or mistake, or to deceive as to the source of origin of the goods or services. (BPC 14245 (a) (1))
- 3) Pursuant to federal law, establishes the Lanham Act, which, among other things, prohibits the use in commerce, without the consent of the registrant, of any reproduction, counterfeit,

copy, or colorable imitation of a registered mark in connection with the sale, offering for sale, distribution, or advertising of any goods or services if such use is likely to cause confusion, or to cause mistake, or to deceive. (15 U.S.C. § 1114(1)(a).)

- 4) Prohibits a person from selling, or offering to sell, an appointment with the Department of Motor Vehicles. (Vehicle Code (VEH) 1680 (a))

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown. This measure has been keyed fiscal by Legislative Counsel

COMMENTS:

- 1) Author's statement. According to the author, "Golf is an incredibly popular sport in California, and its courses attract tourist from all around the world. This legislation is necessary to prevent bad actors from taking advantage of reservations systems for personal gain, as well as taking opportunities from local residents whose taxpayer dollars go towards the upkeep and maintenance of those public and municipal facilities."
- 2) Background. There are over 220 golf courses in California that are municipally owned by cities, counties, charter cities, and the state. As part of publicly owned park systems, these courses operate at below market value to make them maximally available to local residents, seniors, juniors, school athletes, local clubs and civic organizations. This pricing creates a demand for tee times in California urban areas that are among the highest in the nation.

Between 2021 and 2023, twin brothers Se Youn and Hee Youn Kim operated a golf tee time brokering business in which they reserved golf tee times online, including at public golf courses, and resold them to members of the public for a fee, frequently in violation of municipal regulations. The brothers marketed, solicited, and communicated with their customers through various social medial platforms, including KakaoTalk, an instant messaging application. As part of their business, the brothers reserved thousands of tee times for resale at numerous golf courses nationwide, including at least 17 different public courses across Southern California. The brothers created a monopoly of Los Angeles and Orange County area golf course tee times by securing the most sought-after early morning slots, often within seconds of their release to the public. As a result, the brothers made it more difficult and more expensive for members of the public to reserve tee times at these courses without paying them an additional booking fee, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹

- 3) California's Unfair Competition Law (UCL). The UCL is a broad consumer protection statute that prohibits any "unlawful, unfair, or fraudulent" business act or practice. Because of this three-part structure, the law is intentionally expansive. It allows courts to treat violations of other laws as "unlawful" practices, while also reaching conduct that may not be explicitly illegal but is still considered unfair or deceptive to consumers. The statute is commonly used by both private plaintiffs and public prosecutors to address issues such as false advertising, misleading business practices, and anti-competitive behavior, often serving as a flexible enforcement tool when more specific laws may not apply.

¹ Todd Kelly, "Tee time brokers arrested, charged with failing to report \$1 million in income to IRS", Golfweek, September 15, 2025, <https://golfweek.usatoday.com/story/sports/golf/2025/09/15/los-angeles-twins-tee-time-brokers-charged-failing-report-1-million-to-irs/86155507007/>

One of the defining features of the UCL is its emphasis on equitable remedies rather than punishment. Courts can order injunctive relief to stop ongoing practices and require restitution to return money or property to affected consumers, but civil penalties are generally pursued by government officials rather than private parties. Standing under the law was narrowed by Proposition 64 (2004), which requires private plaintiffs to show actual injury and economic loss. Overall, the UCL plays a central role in California's consumer protection framework by giving regulators and individuals a powerful mechanism to challenge a wide range of harmful business conduct.

- 4) Arguments in support. According to a coalition of golf associations, including the sponsor of the bill, the Californian Alliance for Golf, in support, "AB 1954 would give the state's cities, counties, charter cities, and the state itself a tool in the form of a civil remedy that they would have to initiate of their own volition and at their own expense to restrain 3rd party brokering that is not performed by consent (written agreement) of the parties. This is a tool that they do not now have and one that only the state can provide.

"To be clear; it's important to emphasize that this bill does not in any way affect agreements that are freely entered into for ostensible mutual benefit. It only affects brokering without the consent of the public agency that owns the golf course or the management group that the public agency has put under contract to operate its golf course. There are many well-known and popular vendors in that space. They operate by written agreements that bring benefit to both municipality and vendor, not to mention golfers, and would not be affected by AB 1954."

- 5) Double-referral. Should the bill pass from this committee, it will be re-referred to the Assembly Committee on Privacy and Consumer Protection.
- 6) Policy considerations. This bill is addressing an issue that has been experienced by municipal golf courses in the state, where individuals have booked reservations for tee times and then sold them on the secondary market or third party website unaffiliated with the municipal course. These websites may look like they are affiliated with the golf course, where the URL or names and images are similar, but they do not have any agreement in place with the golf course.

Golf is a popular sport that should be an option available to people of every income level. The goal of many municipal courses is to keep the prices low for residents whose taxes fund the upkeep and maintenance of these facilities. It is wrong for individuals to purchase or reserve tee times with the express intention of inflating prices for personal gain, while never intending to use the reservations themselves. It is also wrong to setup misleading websites meant to trick golfers into booking through them rather than a legitimate method provided by the actual golf course.

Marginalized or underserved communities, especially in areas of southern California where the demand for golf tee time reservations are very high in comparison to the supply, should not be forced into a position where the only way to play the sport is to pay brokers far more than the original price being offered by the courses.

7) Prior and related legislation:

- a) AB 1640 (Stefani), of 2026, would prohibit a person from selling a restaurant reservation for more than the amount paid for the reservation, unless the person has the express written authorization from the restaurant. The bill is currently in the Assembly Committee on Judiciary.
- b) AB 1349 (Bryan), of the current legislative session, would require an original ticket seller or a ticket reseller, before listing, marketing, or selling a ticket, to have actual or constructive possession of the ticket, or have the contractual right to sell the ticket. This bill is currently in the Senate pending referral to a policy committee.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**Support**

California Alliance for Golf
California Golf Course Owners Association
California Special Districts Association
California State Association of Counties
City of Los Angeles, Recreation and Parks
Golf Course Superintendents Association of America
Latina Golfers Association
League of California Cities
Mayor Todd Gloria, City of San Diego
Northern California PGA
San Francisco Public Golf Alliance
Southern California Golf Association
Southern California PGA

Opposition

None on file.

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