

## ASSEMBLY THIRD READING

AB 1954 (Ward)

As Amended April 21, 2026

Majority vote

**SUMMARY**

AB 1954 prohibits a person or operator of a third-party golf reservation service platform from listing, advertising, promoting, selling, or transferring golf course reservations on a third-party service platform without a written agreement from the golf course operator.

**Major Provisions**

- 1) Prohibits a person or operator of a third-party golf reservation service platform from listing, advertising, promoting, selling, or transferring reservations for a golf course on a third-party reservation service platform without a written agreement with the golf course operator.
- 2) Authorizes, if a golf course operator does not offer refunds to individuals who purchase golf course reservations, an individual who paid for a golf course reservation to sell or transfer the golf course reservation for no more than the total amount that the individual paid to acquire the reservation.
- 3) States that the authority provided in a written agreement 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.

**COMMENTS**

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.

*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.

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.

### **According to the Author**

"Golf is an incredibly popular sport in California, and its courses attract tourists 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."

### **Arguments in Support**

According to the California Alliance for Golf (Sponsor), "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 per business models that eschew maximal revenue generation in favor of making them maximally available to local residents, seniors, juniors, school athletes, local clubs and civic organizations. Because California's urban areas are among the most golf-starved in the nation, this model creates a demand for tee times second to none. It has also created opportunities for 3rd party tee time brokers to capture and broker tee times at inflated prices and in the process substantially reduce the already strained supply of recreational opportunities available to California residents..."

"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.

"AB 1954 maintains those features of 3rd party arrangements that benefit the consumers of public golf course offerings and the public agencies that provide them, while allowing those public agencies the continued ability to manage those offerings for the benefit of the communities that are in the final analysis the owners of those offerings by balancing the needs of cost recovery and long-term capital reinvestment with the public interest served by offering specialized access to local residents, juniors, seniors, students, school athletes, local clubs, civic organizations, and local charities, and in the cases of some of the state's largest urban parkland golf systems, revenues over and above cost recovery that is then dedicated to non-golf park/recreation programs that would otherwise require public funding."

### **Arguments in Opposition**

None on file.

## **FISCAL COMMENTS**

According to the Assembly Committee on Appropriations:

- 1) Costs (Unfair Competition Law Fund) of an unknown but potentially significant amount to the Department of Justice (DOJ) to bring enforcement actions as authorized by this bill. Actual costs will depend on the number of enforcement actions pursued by DOJ and the amount of additional work created by each action, but costs may be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars annually.
- 2) Ongoing cost pressures (Trial Court Trust Fund, General Fund) of an unknown but potentially significant amount to the courts in additional workload resulting from adding an activity to Unfair Competition Law (UCL). 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. This backfill was \$117.3 million in 2025-26.

## VOTES

### **ASM ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT, SPORTS, AND TOURISM: 8-0-1**

**YES:** Ward, Lackey, Elhawary, Jeff Gonzalez, McKinnor, Ortega, Valencia, Zbur

**ABS, ABST OR NV:** Quirk-Silva

### **ASM PRIVACY AND CONSUMER PROTECTION: 15-0-0**

**YES:** Bauer-Kahan, Macedo, Aguiar-Curry, Bryan, DeMaio, Hoover, Irwin, Lowenthal, McKinnor, Ortega, Patterson, Petrie-Norris, Ward, Wicks, 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

## UPDATED

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