



- 6) Authorizes local agencies to contract with private entities to operate municipal facilities, including golf courses, while retaining public ownership of those facilities. (General contracting authority under GC §§ 37350 et seq. and local agency contracting authority.)

**This bill:**

- 1) Establishes the Protecting Access to Reservations Act which prohibits 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 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. Specifies that this 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.
- 2) Provides that if a golf course operator does not clearly post their cancellation policy on the internet website where the reservation is secured, an individual who paid for a golf course reservation may sell or transfer the golf course reservation for no more than the total amount that the individual paid to acquire the reservation.
- 3) Specifies that a violation of these provisions constitutes an unlawful business act or practice.
- 4) States findings and declarations that:
  - a) the State of California is home to many golf courses that attract tourists from around the world. They also provide recreational, social, health, and charitable benefits to the residents of the communities in which they are located.
  - b) There are over 200 courses in California that are municipally owned by a mix of state, city, county, city and county, and charter cities. Because these public courses are parts of publicly owned park systems, they operate per-pricing structures that make them maximally available to local residents, seniors, juniors, schools, school athletic teams, and local clubs and civic organizations. This pricing creates a demand for tee times that, in California's urban areas, are among the highest if not the highest in the nation.
  - c) Tee time brokers have become a significant issue throughout the state. By booking tee times en masse and selling, reselling, and brokering them at inflated prices on a secondary market, they substantially reduce the already strained supply of recreational opportunities available to California residents and harm the ability of the state's municipal golf course owners to operate them per a maximally affordable business model providing maximal equitable public access.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** This bill is keyed fiscal by Legislative Counsel. According to the Assembly Committee on Appropriations, the bill will result in costs of an unknown but potentially significant amount to the Department of Justice to bring enforcement actions as authorized by this bill and ongoing cost pressures of an unknown but potentially

significant amount to the courts in additional workload resulting from adding an activity to 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.

#### COMMENTS:

1. **Purpose.** This bill is sponsored by the California Alliance for Golf. 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."

The Author advises that 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.

This bill is addressing an issue being experienced by municipal golf course in the state, where individuals are booking reservations for tee times and then selling them on a secondary market. Some are setting up websites that look like they are affiliated with the golf course, where the URL or name is similar, but they do not have any agreement in place with the golf course.

According to the Author, "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."

2. **Background.** California has long prohibited unfair business practices and misleading advertising through the Unfair Competition Law and the False Advertising Law. The UCL is intentionally broad and serves as the state's principal civil enforcement mechanism against unlawful, unfair, and fraudulent business practices. Likewise, the False Advertising Law prohibits businesses from making misleading representations about goods or services offered to consumers.

As online reservation platforms have expanded, questions have arisen about secondary resale of reservations for public and consumer-facing services. Similar concerns have arisen in connection with ticket sales, restaurant reservations, campground reservations, and municipal golf tee times, raising questions about consumer access to limited public resources and the use of automated technologies to obtain reservations for resale. Municipal golf courses are intended to provide affordable public recreational opportunities through reservation systems that allow golfers to book tee times directly with the course. According to the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks, however, unauthorized “tee time brokering” has become an increasing challenge at Los Angeles municipal golf courses. The Department explains that brokers reserve publicly available tee times as soon as they are released and advertise those reservations for resale, later canceling and rebooking the reservation in the purchaser's name.

Public reporting has documented the practical effects of these practices on consumers. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, golfers reported that desirable weekend tee times at popular municipal courses often disappeared within seconds of becoming available, with some subsequently being offered for resale online for additional fees. In response, the City of Los Angeles implemented a pilot reservation deposit program intended to discourage speculative reservations. The City later reported that reservations that were booked and subsequently canceled declined by nearly 95 percent during the program's first six months, and golfers reported improved access to tee times.

A 2025 article in *Golfweek* highlighted that “Between 2021 and 2023, the Kim brothers 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.”

AB 1954 would establish that the unauthorized resale or brokering of reservations at municipally owned golf courses constitutes an unlawful business practice enforceable under California's existing consumer protection laws. As a result, businesses that facilitate or profit from unauthorized reservation brokering could be subject to the remedies available under the UCL, including injunctive relief, restitution, and civil penalties in actions brought by authorized public prosecutors. The bill does not prohibit municipally owned golf courses from contracting with authorized reservation vendors or technology providers. Rather, it seeks to prohibit the unauthorized commercial resale of tee times made available through public reservation systems.

3. **Arguments in Support.** According to supporters, “Unauthorized third-party reservation services charge higher rates and make it difficult for residents to book tee-times at municipal courses where fees are kept affordable to ensure access to residents. Many of these third-party brokers are using sophisticated websites and paying for search engine optimization, which confuses consumers who do not intend to use these platforms. AB 1954 is a commonsense approach that will provide local jurisdictions with the option to pursue legal action against these platforms operating without an agreement. Currently, municipalities have minimal legal standing to stop unauthorized third-party reservation services and cease and desist orders are commonly ignored.”

Supporters write that “When the ubiquity of 3rd party brokering became a front page story in Los Angeles and other California urban areas in 2024, municipalities adopted various forms of reservation protocols that mitigated the problem but in the end were not capable of solving it – protocols that involved additional expense to their patrons... 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...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.”

## **SUPPORT AND OPPOSITION:**

### Support:

California Alliance for Golf  
 California Association of Recreation & Park Districts  
 California Golf Course Owners Association  
 California Special Districts Association  
 California State Association of Counties  
 California State Association of Counties  
 City of Los Angeles  
 City of Los Angeles, Recreation and Parks  
 City of San Clemente  
 City of Thousand Oaks  
 County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation  
 Golf Course Superintendents Association of America  
 Latina Golfers Association  
 League of California Cities  
 Northern California PGA  
 San Francisco Public Golf Alliance  
 Southern California Golf Association  
 Southern California PGA

### Opposition:

None received

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