

Date of Hearing: April 29, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 1961 (Ahrens) – As Amended April 16, 2026

Policy Committee:	Labor and Employment	Vote:	7 - 0
	Judiciary		12 - 0

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

SUMMARY:

This bill authorizes an employer to seek a workplace violence restraining order (WVRO) on behalf of all employees at the employer’s workplace under certain conditions.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Authorizes an employer to seek a WVRO on behalf of all employees, without naming a specific employee, at the employer’s workplace or a location where a group of employees perform their primary job duties if harassment, unlawful violence, or a credible threat of violence is directed at that workplace or location, rather than a specific employee.
- 2) Requires the Judicial Council to adopt or modify related WVRO forms by January 1, 2028.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) Ongoing cost pressures of an unknown amount, potentially in excess of \$150,000, to the courts in additional workload to hear and adjudicate additional WVRO requests and misdemeanor offenses for violations of such orders (General Fund (GF) or Trial Court Trust Fund (TCTF)). It is unclear how many additional WVROs may be filed and violated statewide and how much court time may be needed to adjudicate each related case, but 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 staff and the TCTF may create a demand for increased court funding from the GF. The state budget provides annual GF backfills to the TCTF to offset revenue reductions, totaling approximately \$117.3 million in fiscal year 2025-26.
- 2) Minor and absorbable costs to the Judicial Council to modify related WVRO forms over the course of one year.

The Legislative Analyst’s Office recently warned of GF structural deficits of around \$35 billion per year in the 2027-28 fiscal year and ongoing.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** The author contends that this bill “enables restraining orders to be issued when threats are aimed at groups of employees at the workplace, rather than targeting individuals.” The author explains:

AB 1961 addresses a critical gap in our workplace safety laws. Currently, employers can obtain workplace violence restraining orders when a specific employee is targeted. However, there has been a rise in threats directed at entire workplaces, especially schools, without naming any individual. In these cases, courts may deny protection, leaving workers and students at risk.

This bill is sponsored by the Association of California School Administrators and supported by other employer associations and labor organizations.

- 2) **Workplace Violence Restraining Order.** Existing law authorizes an employer or union representative to seek a WVRO protecting one or more employees who have suffered harassment, violence, or threats in the workplace. However, the sponsor of this bill cites the anecdotal experiences of employers being unable to obtain WVROs in circumstances involving threats to a workplace generally, as the threats were not made against an individual employee. This bill specifies that an employer may seek a WVRO on behalf of all employees, without naming a specific employee, if harassment, unlawful violence, or a credible threat of violence is directed at the workplace or location where a group of employees perform their primary job duties.

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