
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 1961 (Ahrens) - Civil actions: protective orders: workplace violence

Version: June 18, 2026

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: June 29, 2026

Policy Vote: JUD. 11 - 0

Mandate: No

Consultant: Bob Franzonia

Bill Summary: AB 1961 would authorize an employer to seek a workplace violence restraining order (WVRO) on behalf of all employees at the workplace or location if harassment, unlawful violence or a credible threat of violence is directed at that workplace or location.

Fiscal Impact: Unknown cost pressure to the courts to hear and adjudicate new WVRO requests and misdemeanor offenses for violations of any orders. Although courts are not funded on the basis of workload, increased cost pressure on the Trial Court Trust Fund may increase demand for additional funding. The FY 2026-27 Budget contains \$70 million to backfill the Trial Court Trust Fund (Trial Court Trust Fund, General Fund).

Minor, absorbable costs to the Judicial Council to modify WVRO forms (General Fund).

Background: Current law authorizes an employer to petition for a civil restraining order for an employee who has suffered harassment, violence or a credible threat of violence at the workplace.

Current law does not authorize an employer to seek a workplace violence restraining order on behalf of an entire workplace or group of employees when the threats or violence are directed at the group of employees or location rather than an individual employee.

Related Legislation: AB 2179 (Patel), 2026 requires a court, beginning July 1, 2027, to permit electronic filings and remote appearances in proceedings for a workplace violence restraining order, and requires the Judicial Council to develop the necessary forms and rules to implement those requirements on or before January 1, 2028. AB 2179 was reported to Third Reading by this committee.

AB 1753 (Stefani), 2026, provides that a party, support person, or witness may appear remotely at a hearing on a petition for a workplace violence restraining order; that no fee may be charged for a remote appearance; and that the superior court of each county must develop local rules and instructions for such remote appearances. AB 1753 is pending hearing in Senate Judiciary Committee.

AB 824 (Stefani), 2025, relating to protective orders and ammunition, also proposed similar changes to the workplace violence restraining order statute as AB 1753 (Stefani) above. AB 824 was held in this committee.

AB 394 (Wilson), Chapter 147/2025 clarified that a court, when issuing a workplace violence restraining order to protect a public transit system employee from violence in the workplace, may make the order enforceable across the entirety of the public transit system where the underlying act of violence occurred, as specified.

SB 553 (Cortese), Chapter 289/2023 authorized collective bargaining representatives to seek workplace violence restraining orders on behalf of employees.