

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING

AB 2103 (Irwin)

As Amended April 27, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

This bill codifies, effective January 1, 2027, the Engaged California Program within the Office of Data and Innovation (ODI), establishes a topic-selection process involving the Legislature and the Secretary of Government Operations, sets reporting requirements, and authorizes ODI to accept supplemental funding from partner organizations subject to restrictions on funder participation.

Major Provisions

- 1) Establishes the Engaged California Program within ODI for the purpose of facilitating structured dialogue between Californians and state government through deliberation, shared learning, and development of actionable recommendations to inform government services and policies.
- 2) Requires ODI to design, operate, and maintain the platform necessary to enable the program, establish standards and best practices for platform use, and ensure the platform remains up to date.
- 3) Conditions the program's deliberation responsibilities on appropriation by the Legislature and selection of a topic.
- 4) Authorizes the Speaker of the Assembly, the President pro Tempore of the Senate, and the Secretary of Government Operations to select topics for deliberation, subject to specified topic-selection criteria.
- 5) Requires ODI to solicit participation from a diverse group of participants for each topic, identify relevant state agencies, and coordinate with those agencies' communications and external affairs teams.
- 6) Authorizes ODI to accept supplemental funding from partner organizations, including other state entities, philanthropic organizations, and civil groups, and prohibits external funders from participating in topic selection or deliberation.
- 7) Expands ODI's existing annual report to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee to include detailed information on each Engaged California deliberation, including topic, problem definition, platform used, data sources, agencies impacted, participant demographics and identification methods, outcomes and recommendations, and follow-up status of prior-year deliberations.
- 8) Provides that any unspent FY 2026-27 program funds remain available for use during FY 2027-28.
- 9) Adds personal information protections for data collected through the program, consistent with the Information Practices Act.

COMMENTS

The Engaged California Program is a program housed in the Office of Data and Innovation (ODI) that is designed to strengthen trust between Californians and their state government by creating a structured approach to public engagement. The program functions as a modern digital forum that allows participants to opt in to the conversation at their convenience. It is built to gather input using structured dialogue and balanced information, combined with an outreach approach to ensure participation reflects those most impacted by the topic under consideration.

This process was administratively created and has been deployed by ODI several times. The author provides two examples. During the Los Angeles fire recovery effort, impacted residents helped identify and prioritize recovery needs. Through a statewide workforce engagement, state employees provided input on improving service delivery. In both cases, participants could see how their input informed recommendations, while state leaders gained a clearer understanding of priorities on complex issues.

On May 7, the Governor announced the first statewide effort asking Californians to share details on how artificial intelligence is affecting their work, the economy, and what the state should do about it.

According to the Author

AB 2103 modernizes how Californians engage with their government by codifying Engaged California within the Office of Data and Innovation as a permanent statewide public engagement program. While traditional tools like hearings and public comment remain important, they do not always capture the full diversity and tapestry of California's communities. This bill provides a durable framework for structured public deliberation so that Californians from different backgrounds and regions can participate more meaningfully in state policymaking and help generate actionable recommendations that inform government policies. This measure ensures that the program can continue across administrations, preserving an innovative model for enhanced civic engagement.

Arguments in Support

Elevate California writes in support:

Elevate California's mission is to bridge the gap between everyday Californians and the policymaking process. Too often, traditional avenues for public participation fail to capture the full diversity of perspectives across our state and structural barriers exclude ordinary Californians from meaningful civic engagement.

AB 2103 represents an important step forward in modernizing how Californians engage with their government. By codifying Engaged California as a permanent statewide public engagement program within the Office of Data and Innovation, this bill ensures that more inclusive, representative, and deliberative processes become a sustained part of state governance.

Engaged California's model—bringing together diverse cohorts of residents, providing balanced educational materials, and facilitating structured dialogue—aligns closely with Elevate California's commitment to amplifying the voices of everyday Californians. AB 2103 provides the stability and flexibility needed to sustain and scale this effort across state government.

Also writing in support, Project Liberty states:

AB 2103 codifies Engaged California as a permanent program within the Office of Data and Innovation, addressing limitations in traditional public participation methods. While public hearings, town halls, and comment periods remain important, they often fail to reach a representative cross-section of Californians due to barriers such as time, geography, and accessibility.

Engaged California offers a more inclusive approach. By bringing together diverse participant cohorts, providing clear and nonpartisan information, and facilitating structured dialogue, the program enables more informed and meaningful public input. It also turns that input into actionable insights, helping decision makers create policies and programs that better reflect the needs and experiences of Californians.

Project Liberty has deep experience building the kind of digital public infrastructure that powers programs like Engaged California. Our work on open protocols and deliberative platforms, in partnership with governments and institutions around the world, demonstrates that technology-enabled civic engagement can operate at scale while maintaining the trust and safety that meaningful public participation requires.

By establishing Engaged California in statute, AB 2103 ensures continuity across administrations and reinforces the state's commitment to transparent, inclusive, and effective governance.

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

- 1) Likely absorbable costs (General Fund and the Data and Innovation Services Revolving Fund) to the Office of Data and Innovation (ODI) to codify and administer the Engaged California Program. ODI reports it can absorb the requirements of this bill within existing resources. The Engaged California Program is currently operating administratively within ODI; this bill codifies the program in statute effective January 1, 2027, and adds governance, reporting, and operational requirements.
- 2) Unknown, potentially significant workload impact on other state agencies (General Fund, special funds), plausibly exceeding \$150,000 annually in the aggregate. Section 12815(q)(7) requires state agencies identified by ODI as having relevant knowledge or expertise on a selected topic to coordinate with ODI on outreach, community engagement, and communications, and to provide any necessary data and information. These obligations are imposed on state agencies whose identities depend on the topics selected; the bill provides no funding for the affected agencies. The magnitude is unknown and varies by topic, but could be material for agencies

VOTES

ASM PRIVACY AND CONSUMER PROTECTION: 15-0-0

YES: Bauer-Kahan, Macedo, Bryan, DeMaio, Hoover, Irwin, Lowenthal, McKinnor, Ortega, Patterson, Pellerin, 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

VERSION: April 27, 2026

CONSULTANT: Julie Salley / P. & C.P. / (916) 319-2200

FN: 0002965