

SENATE PRIVACY, DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES, AND CONSUMER PROTECTION COMMITTEE
Senator Christopher Cabaldon, Chair
2025-2026 Regular Session

AB 2103 (Irwin)
Version: April 27, 2026
Hearing Date: June 15, 2026
Fiscal: Yes
Urgency: No
BH

SUBJECT

Office of Data and Innovation: Engaged California Program

DIGEST

This bill establishes the Engaged California Program within the Office of Data and Innovation (ODI) inside the Government Operations Agency.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This bill creates the Engaged California Program within ODI to facilitate structured dialogue between Californians and their state government through deliberation and shared learning. It authorizes the Legislature to fund the program and participate in the selection of discussion topics. It sets additional reporting requirements, including topic, problem definition, data sources, agencies impacted, and participant demographics, as specified.

The bill is author-sponsored and supported by a coalition of tech associations, (Technet, TechCA) and citizen advocacy groups (Elevate California, Project Liberty, LLC). No opposition has been received by the committee.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE LAW

Existing law:

- 1) Provides for open meetings and citizen participation from local school boards to the California State Legislature. The Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act (Gov. Code §§ 11120-11132) requires meetings of state boards and commissions to be conducted openly. Additionally, the Ralph M. Brown Act (Gov. Code §§ 54950-54963) imposes similar requirements on local legislative bodies.

This bill:

- 1) Creates the Engaged California Act within the Office of Data and Innovation (ODI) within the Government Operations Agency. ODI is to operate as a standalone entity within the agency.
- 2) Establishes the mission of ODI as delivering better government services to the people of California through technology and service innovation, data, and design. The office shall fulfill this mission by:
 - a) Collaborating with state entities to transform government services.
 - b) Investing in state capabilities to put users first.
 - c) Empowering agencies to use data ethically, efficiently, effectively, securely, responsibly, and in a manner that respects privacy.
 - d) Improving how the state buys digital services and datasets.
 - e) Expanding the use of common platforms, services, and tools.
- 3) Requires ODI to design, operate, and maintain the platform, establish standards, guidance, and best practices for use of the platform, consistent with state and federal law, ensuring the platform remains up to date for future deployment.
- 4) Conditions the program's deliberation responsibilities on appropriation by the Legislature and selection of a topic.
- 5) Establishes a process for the deliberation and selection of discussion topics as specified.
- 6) Requires the office to solicit participation from diverse groups of participants, including all economic segments.
- 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 the FY 2027-28.
- 9) Adds personal information protections for data collected through the program, consistent with the Information Practices Act.

COMMENTS

1. Citizen/Government communication:

Open and transparent communication with government is a central value of American democracy. However, as governments have grown larger and more complex, the ability of California citizens to access their government has grown equally more complex. This bill seeks to address a structural gap in how Californians participate in state policymaking and how state government gathers public input.

2. Author's statement:

"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."

3. 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 in support, Project Liberty writes:

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.

SUPPORT

Elevate California
Project Liberty LLC
Responsive Gov Action
Techca
Technet

OPPOSITION

None on file

PRIOR VOTES:

Assembly Floor (Ayes 72, Noes 0)

Assembly Appropriations Committee (Ayes 15, Noes 0)

Assembly Privacy and Consumer Protection Committee (Ayes 15, Noes 0)
