

CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

AB 2120 (Solache)

As Amended June 22, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Extends until January 1, 2031, the authority for the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) to use an alternative merit hiring process for certain prescribed classified positions requiring specialized skills; authorizes the LAUSD to retain certain employees hired through that process during layoffs without regard to seniority when necessary to preserve those specialized qualifications, and requires the LAUSD to report to the Legislature on its use of these exemptions.

Senate Amendments

- 1) Require the LAUSD, on or before January 1, 2030, to submit a report to the Legislature on the use of an exemption to the merit system process authorized by this bill, and prescribe the information to be reported.
- 2) Sunset the LAUSD's merit system exemption authority on January 1, 2031, and make a technical clarifying change.

COMMENTS*Continues a Longstanding, Narrowly-tailored Exception to the LAUSD's Merit Hiring Process*

Since 2003, the Legislature has periodically authorized the LAUSD to bypass the traditional "rule of three ranks" for a limited number of specialized classified positions where particular skills are necessary on day one, such as language proficiency or other technical qualifications. Rather than creating a new hiring framework, this bill extends an existing authority that has been repeatedly revisited and refined by the Legislature over the past two decades.

Expands the Exception Beyond Hiring Decisions by Allowing Selective Retention During Layoffs

Current law only provides flexibility during hiring. This bill also allows the LAUSD to retain an employee hired through selective certification during a reduction in force, notwithstanding normal seniority rules, when the employee possesses specialized qualifications that the district would otherwise lose. While this may help preserve critical operational expertise, it also represents a departure from longstanding merit system protections that generally prioritize seniority during layoffs.

Reflects the Balance Between Merit System Principles and Operational Flexibility

California's merit system is designed to promote objective hiring and protect against favoritism by relying on competitive examinations and seniority-based personnel decisions. Simultaneously, the LAUSD has argued that certain highly specialized positions cannot always be filled efficiently under the traditional process and that preserving employees with unique qualifications may be necessary to maintain district operations. This bill continues this limited exception while incorporating additional transparency intended to allow future legislative review of whether the flexibility remains justified.

Please see the various policy committee analyses for a full discussion of this bill.

According to the Author

"Without selective certification, if the first three ranks do not possess the necessary knowledge or certification, the hiring division faces significant operational risks. The division is compelled to onboard individuals who require immediate, intensive remedial training. This results in a prolonged skills and productivity gap of up to two years, increased turnover, and the additional cost of restarting the recruitment cycle should the candidate fail to achieve the necessary competencies. Selective certification allows the district to most efficiently utilize taxpayer dollars by hiring candidates who are able to effectively perform the job on day one.

"Additionally, in the event of a reduction in force, the District may be compelled to lay off a recently-hired employee who was hired specifically due to possessing a certain skill set or qualification. This bill would allow the district to skip over these employees during reductions in force, if following the typical layoff pattern would deprive the district of the special skill for which the employee was hired."

Arguments in Support

According to the LAUSD, "Los Angeles Unified has used Selective Certification since 2003, which allows the district to move quickly to fill certain positions that require skills that cannot be acquired on the job, such as fluency in a foreign language. Prior to the implementation of Selective Certification in 2003, the district required between one to three months to fill a vacancy. These positions are now filled in two to five weeks, greatly improving continued service for our staff and students. Additionally, Selective Certification allows the district to most efficiently utilize taxpayer dollars by hiring candidates who have the skills to effectively perform the job on day one. AB 2120 will further the impact of this policy, by allowing the district to retain employees with specialized skill sets during reductions in force."

Arguments in Opposition

None.

FISCAL COMMENTS

This bill was passed by the Senate Committee on Appropriations pursuant to Senate Rule 28.8.

VOTES:**ASM PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT AND RETIREMENT: 6-0-1**

YES: McKinnor, Lackey, Boerner, Garcia, Nguyen, Michelle Rodriguez

ABS, ABST OR NV: Alanis

ASM EDUCATION: 9-0-0

YES: Patel, Hoover, Alvarez, Bonta, Castillo, Garcia, Lowenthal, Pellerin, Zbur

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 14-0-1

YES: Wicks, Hoover, Aguiar-Curry, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

ABS, ABST OR NV: Arambula

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 77-0-3

YES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

ABS, ABST OR NV: Arambula, Flora, Celeste Rodriguez

SENATE FLOOR: 39-0-1

YES: Allen, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Grove, Hurtado, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Reyes, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

ABS, ABST OR NV: Alvarado-Gil

UPDATED

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