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# SENATE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Senator María Elena Durazo, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

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**Bill No:** AB 2257  
**Author:** Hart  
**Version:** 5/22/26

**Hearing Date:** 7/1/26  
**Fiscal:** No  
**Consultant:** Peterson

## ***CORRECTIONS: JAIL ADMINISTRATORS***

*Allows a county board of supervisors to establish the position of jail administrator.*

### **Background**

***County governance.*** Counties fall into two types: “general law” and “charter.” General law counties are organized according to the generally applicable laws for county governance established by the Legislature that set the number, appointment, and election procedures for county officials, including the board of supervisors.

Charter counties have greater leeway to determine their own governance structure, including to elect additional supervisors and appoint or elect additional officers. A new charter, or the amendment of an existing charter, may be proposed by the board of supervisors, a charter commission, or an initiative petition. There are 14 charter counties: Alameda, Butte, El Dorado, Fresno, Los Angeles, Orange, Placer, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Tehama. Most large counties are charter counties: eight of the ten largest counties by population have adopted charters.

All counties elect or appoint a variety of county officials. The California Constitution requires all counties to elect a sheriff, district attorney, assessor, and board of supervisors, and state law lists the officers that general law counties must have. State law gives county boards of supervisors the authority to consolidate the duties of certain county offices by ordinance.

***Duties of the sheriff.*** Sheriffs have three primary duties: (1) police unincorporated areas, (2) operate the county jail, and (3) attend to and execute orders of the courts. In large counties, they manage thousands of employees, including both sworn peace officers and other non-sworn staff. Some counties have enacted ordinances to consolidate the sheriff and coroner into a single office.

SB 1356 (Campbell, 1988) added eligibility requirements to run for county sheriff. To justify the need for qualifications, the California State Sheriffs Association, who sponsored the legislation, argued:

- The position of sheriff is a complex law enforcement position and it is only reasonable to require a minimum amount of law enforcement education and experience for this important position; and
- Without these qualifications, unqualified persons regularly seek access to a position that is responsible for the administration and operation of a county sheriff's office. This unqualified access has cluttered the campaign process with office seekers who have no

law enforcement experience. If elected, these individuals are either unqualified to hold office or of such a questionable background as to have a negative impact on the office.

SB 1356 provided that no person is eligible to become a candidate for the office of sheriff in any county unless, at the time of the final filing date for election, he or she meets one of the following criteria:

- An active or inactive advanced certificate issued by the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST).
- One year of full-time, salaried law enforcement experience at least a portion of which shall have been accomplished within five years prior to the date of filing, and possesses a master's degree from an accredited college or university.
- Two years of full-time, salaried law enforcement experience at least a portion of which shall have been accomplished within five years prior to the date of filing, and possesses a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university.
- Three years of full-time, salaried law enforcement experience at least a portion of which shall have been accomplished within five years prior to the date of filing, and possesses an associate in arts or associate in science degree, or the equivalent, from an accredited college.
- Four years of full-time, salaried law enforcement experience at least a portion of which shall have been accomplished within five years prior to the date of filing, and possesses a high school diploma or the equivalent.

All individuals holding the office of sheriff on January 1, 1989, were deemed to have met all qualifications required for candidates seeking election. These requirements have remained unchanged since.

Until 1957, sheriffs had the sole authority to manage jails. In 1957, the Legislature enacted SB 865 (Richards), which allowed a board of supervisors to adopt a resolution to establish a department of corrections to take over the jail. The board of supervisors would appoint a director who had jurisdiction over the county's roles relating to punishment, care, treatment, and rehabilitation of incarcerated persons, including the county jail, industrial farms, and road camps. In 1975, the Napa County Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution to establish their department of corrections that continues to operate their jail to this day.

In 1993, SB 991 (Calderon) prevented other counties from shifting the management of the county jail away from the sheriff by requiring that the sheriff be the sole and exclusive authority to keep the county jail, except for those under the supervision of a work furlough administrator, and except in counties that shifted these responsibilities away from the sheriff before July 1, 1993. Napa County remains the only county with a jail managed by a department of corrections, not the sheriff. Even in counties where the sheriff operates the jail, the county board of supervisors determines the level of funding it provides to the sheriff's department in its annual budget process.

The author wants to give county boards of supervisors more oversight over the county officers running the jail.

### Proposed Law

Assembly Bill 2257 allows a county board of supervisors to establish the position of jail administrator by resolution to serve as the executive officer of all county jails and possess supervisory authority over all staff and incarcerated individuals.

After the board establishes the position, the county sheriff has 90 days to submit their nomination to fill the position. The board has 60 days to confirm or deny the appointment. The board can consider any relevant factor, including:

- Professional experience in corrections management;
- Experience managing public budgets;
- Extensive familiarity with state and national standards for jail accreditation;
- Extensive familiarity with the requirements for appropriate medical and mental health care within a correctional setting;
- Demonstrated commitment to protecting the civil and human rights of incarcerated individuals; and
- Knowledge of best practices and evidence-based approaches to rehabilitation.

If the board denies the candidate, the sheriff must nominate a different candidate, and has another 60 days to confirm or deny that candidate. A nominee for a jail administrator position that has never been filled can serve as interim jail administrator during the review process.

Jail administrators serve three-year terms and retain their peace officer status while serving in that office. The sheriff supervises the day-to-day operations of, evaluates, disciplines, and can remove the jail administrator. Up to six months before a jail administrator's term expires, the sheriff may nominate a new jail administrator.

### Comments

1. Purpose of the bill. According to the author, "California's county jails are in crisis. Jail deaths are at record highs. People with mental illness languish without adequate care. Staffing shortages persist, while financial mismanagement threatens essential public services.

"Since the passage of Senate Bill 911 in 1993, elected sheriffs have held sole and exclusive authority over the operation of county jails. At the same time, county boards of supervisors have remained legally obligated to fund those jails — without authority to compel needed changes. With their policymaking authority ending at the jail door, boards of supervisors are put in the position of writing blank checks while jail issues persist. AB 2257 will reintroduce local choice over jail administration and encourage collaboration and accountability. If a sheriff-run model is serving the community well, it should continue. If not—and particularly in the face of longstanding issues—a board of supervisors should have the authority to evaluate and pursue a structure that better serves the community. Whether counties act to change their jail governance systems or not, having a second option raises the incentive for all parties to improve jail operations and management."

2. Not so big. AB 2257 does not change who runs the jail. The sheriff remains in charge, but requires their deputy that runs the day-to-day jail operations to come before the board every three years. If the county is not satisfied, they can choose not to confirm the sheriff's nomination.

That said, the sheriff continues to have the authority to nominate a jail administrator. It is unlikely the sheriff will decide to nominate a change agent to the role. In other words, AB 2257 serves more to ensure the county board continues to be informed about jail operations, not to replace the organization structure of the jail.

3. Back to the future. Until 1993, the state gave counties the option of establishing a department of corrections run by an appointed county official rather than the sheriff or their deputies. In fact, Napa County still operates its jail in this fashion. This gives county boards of supervisors more or less complete control over jail operations. AB 2257 does not go that far. It preserves the sheriff's oversight of jail operations intact. If a county truly wanted to shake up jail operations, AB 2257 would not give them this authority. The Committee may wish to consider whether to give counties back the authority to create departments of corrections outside of the sheriff's control if they are not satisfied with the direction of jail operations.

4. What's the procedure? AB 2257 requires the county board to confirm the sheriff's nomination of the jail administrator but does not spell out how a county should do so. Existing law allows a local agency to hold closed session during a regular or special meeting to consider the appointment, employment, evaluation of performance, discipline, or dismissal of a public employee. This appointment would seem to fit this definition, meaning the appointment could happen in closed session without giving the public an opportunity to convey what they think about jail operations. The Committee may wish to consider amending the bill to require the county board to hold a public hearing on jail operations before they consider the nomination of the jail administrator.

5. Incoming! The Senate Rules Committee has ordered a double referral of AB 2257: first to the Committee on Public Safety, which approved the bill at its June 23<sup>rd</sup> hearing on a vote of 5-1, and second to the Committee on Local Government.

### Assembly Actions

Assembly Public Safety Committee:	5-3
Assembly Floor:	41-25

### Support and Opposition (6/26/26)

Support: Laura Capps, Supervisor, Santa Barbara County  
 Monica Montgomery Steppe, Supervisor, San Diego County  
 Noelia Corzo, Supervisor, San Mateo County  
 805 Undocufund  
 Advocacy on the 101  
 Buen Vecino  
 California Coalition for Sheriff Oversight  
 California for Safety and Justice  
 California Public Defenders Association  
 Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy  
 Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice - Ventura County  
 Coastal Legal Center  
 County of Santa Barbara  
 Diversity Coalition San Luis Obispo County  
 Freedom 4 Youth

Future Leaders of America  
Indivisible Santa Barbara  
Indivisible Santa Maria  
Kingston, Martinez, and Hogan Llp  
LA Raza Community Resource Center  
Law Office of Richard Wagner  
Legal Services for Prisoners With Children  
Mariposa Advocacy and Legal Services  
Mixteco/indigena Community Organizing Project (MICOP)  
Nextgen California  
O.l.a. Raza  
Oakland Privacy  
Oasis Legal Services  
One Step a LA Vez  
Prosecutors Alliance Action  
San Luis Obispo Unitarian Universalist  
San Quentin Skunkworks  
Santa Barbara County Immigrant Legal Defense Center  
Santa Paula Latino Town Hall  
Smart Justice California, a Project of Beyond Impact  
The Fund for Santa Barbara  
Unitarian Society of Santa Barbara - Justice and Equity Team  
One individual

Opposition: California State Sheriffs' Association  
County of Fresno  
Los Angeles County Professional Peace Officers Association  
Peace Officers Research Association of California (PORAC)

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