

Date of Hearing: April 21, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONS

Marc Berman, Chair

AB 2485 (Ahrens) – As Amended March 16, 2026

SUBJECT: Bureau of Security and Investigative Services: private investigators: client service agreements.

SUMMARY: Requires that a licensed private investigator, when providing a copy of an initial service agreement or an amendment to an agreement to a client, must provide the copy in the preferred language of the client if the client primarily speaks a language other than English.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the Bureau within the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) to license and regulate the locksmith, reposessor, private investigator, proprietary security, private security, and alarm company industries. (Business and Professions Code (BPC) §§ 6980.1, 7501, 7512.4, 7574.01, 7580, 7591)
- 2) Establishes the Private Investigator Act to provide for Bureau regulation of private investigators. (BPC §§ 7512 et seq.)
- 3) Requires that every agreement between a private investigator and a client, including, but not limited to, contract agreements and investigative agreements, including all labor, services, and materials to be provided for the scope of work conducted by the private investigator, shall be in writing, and shall contain, but not be limited to, the following:
 - a) The licensed private investigator's name, business address, business telephone number, and license number,
 - b) A disclosure that private investigators are licensed and regulated by the BSIS,
 - c) The approximate start and completion dates of the work to be provided,
 - d) A description of the scope of the investigation or services to be provided,
 - e) An indication as to whether or not a written report is to be provided to the client and the agreed upon method of delivery of that written report, as applicable,
 - f) An explanation of the fees agreed upon by the parties, including a breakdown of how the fees are assessed by the licensee, and
 - g) Any other matters agreed upon by the parties.

(BPC § 7524(a))

- 4) Requires that any amendment to an initial service agreement between a private investigator and a client shall be in writing, as specified and with certain conditions, including that the

amendment be legible, and that the client approve the amendment in writing before further work commences. (BPC § 7524(b)(c))

- 5) Requires that private investigators maintain a legible copy of the signed agreement and investigative findings, including any written report, for a minimum of two years, and shall be made available for inspection by the BSIS upon demand. (BPC § 7524(e))

THIS BILL:

- 1) Requires that, if a client primarily speaks a language other than English, a licensed private investigator shall provide a copy of the initial service agreement and a copy of any amendment, addendum, or other modification to the agreement in the preferred language of that client.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown; this bill is keyed fiscal by the Legislative Counsel.

COMMENTS:

Purpose. This bill is author-sponsored. According to the author:

For the substantial portion of Californians with limited proficiency in English, AB 2485 takes a crucial step to expand access to licensed private investigators. California is at its best when it protects consumers and expands access to services for vulnerable individuals. While lacking proficiency in English may impose many barriers to Californians on a day-to-day basis, this bill will ensure that the ability to contract with licensed private investigators is not one of them.

Background.

The Bureau of Security and Investigative Services. The private security industry in this country dates back to the 19th century when private citizens performed many duties that are associated with Federal and state law enforcement today. Growth in the number of individuals and the breadth of activities performed (guarding railroad shipments, detective work to investigate crimes, tracking down and apprehending criminals, and providing security advice to banks) were integral to determining that regulation of the industry was necessary.

In California, regulatory oversight of the private security industry began in 1915 when the Detective Licensing Board was created under the State Board of Prison Directors to license and regulate private detectives. The Detective Licensing Board was subsequently renamed the Detective Licensing Bureau and its statutes are currently known as the Private Investigator Act. In 1955, the Detective Licensing Bureau became the Bureau of Private Investigators and Adjustors that was combined with the Collection Agency Licensing Bureau in 1970 and renamed the Bureau of Collection and Investigative Services.

Assembly Bill 936 (Rainey, Chapter 1263, Statutes of 1993) formally renamed the Bureau as its current identifier, the Bureau of Security and Investigative Services (Bureau or BSIS). The BSIS administers six practice acts and regulates the industries affected by each practice act, including the Private Investigator Act.

A private investigator is an individual who investigates crimes; the identity, business, occupation, or character of a person; the location of lost or stolen property; or the cause of fires, losses, accidents, damage, or injury. In addition, a private investigator secures evidence for use in court. Private investigators may protect persons only if such services are incidental to an investigation, and they may not protect property. As specified in the Private Investigator Act, individuals performing private investigation activities must hold a private investigator license issued by the BSIS.

Private Investigator-Client Agreements. In the course of the BSIS's 2024 sunset review, it was raised that the Private Investigator Act did not provide any standard regarding agreements between a private investigator and their client. Most notably, there was no standard that an agreement—including the scope, terms, and fees for a contract—be in writing. As a result, the BSIS argued that when they received a complaint from a consumer related to a private investigator breaching an agreement, it was difficult for staff to investigate the complaint, often resulting in back-and-forth accusations between the licensee and client with little resolution. According to statistics from the BSIS provided to the Committees at the time, 27% of all consumer complaints regarding private investigators alleged that the investigator failed to render services or report to the consumer as agreed.

As a result, SB 1454 (Ashby, Chapter 484, Statutes of 2024), the 2024 sunset bill for the BSIS, added language that specifically mandates private investigators enter into a written agreement with clients that details, among other things, the estimated length of work, the scope of investigation, and an explanation of all fees agreed upon by the parties. Upon completion of the investigation, any written report must be provided to the client within 30 days, and the licensee must retain a copy of the agreement and any subsequent findings, amendments, or reports for a minimum of two years.

However, current law does not specify what language the service agreement must be written in. According to the author, data from the U.S. Census Bureau demonstrates that over 40 percent of Californians speak a language other than English at home, and nearly half of that population (17.1%) does not speak English proficiently or at all. As a result, the author has put forward this bill to require that, if a client primarily speaks a language other than English, a licensed private investigator shall provide a copy of the initial service agreement and a copy of any amendment, addendum, or other modification to the agreement in the preferred language of that client.

Prior Related Legislation. SB 1454 (Ashby), Chapter 484, Statutes of 2024, extended the sunset date for the BSIS and enacted various changes resulting from its sunset review, including the requirement that a private investigator provide a written copy of a service agreement to a client, as specified.

REGISTERED SUPPORT:

There is no support on file.

REGISTERED OPPOSITION:

There is no opposition on file.

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