
THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 2534
Author: Kalra (D), et al.
Amended: 6/11/26 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE: 13-0, 6/23/26

AYES: Umberg, Niello, Allen, Ashby, Caballero, Durazo, Laird, Reyes, Stern,
Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 6-0, 8/13/26

AYES: Cervantes, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson

NO VOTE RECORDED: Wahab

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 69-0, 5/7/26 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Domestic Violence Prevention Act: forced marriage

SOURCE: Family Violence Law Center
Tahirih Justice Center

DIGEST: This bill adds “forced marriage,” as defined, to the list of abusive conduct constituting domestic violence under the Domestic Violence Prevention Act (DVPA) and clarifies that a person may obtain a DVPA order to protect against a forced marriage.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the DVPA, which sets forth procedural and substantive requirements for the issuance of a temporary restraining order or a protective order to, among other things, enjoin specific acts of abuse or prohibit the abuser from coming within a specified distance of the abused person. (Family (Fam.) Code, §§ 6200 et seq.)

- 2) Defines “domestic violence” as abuse perpetrated against a spouse or former spouse; a cohabitant or former cohabitant; a person with whom the respondent is having or has had a dating or engagement relationship; a person with whom the respondent has had a child, as specified; a child of a party or a child who is the subject of an action under the Uniform Parentage Act, as specified; or any other person related by consanguinity or affinity within the second degree. (Fam. Code, § 6211.)
- 3) Authorizes a court to issue an ex parte temporary restraining order (TRO) under the DVPA without a noticed hearing. (Fam. Code, §§ 6320-6327.)
- 4) Authorizes a court to issue DVPO under the DVPA after a noticed hearing at which the alleged abuser may appear. (Fam. Code, §§ 6340-6347.)
- 5) Provides that an order issued under 3) or 4) may enjoin a party from molesting, attacking, striking, stalking, threatening, sexually assaulting, battering, credibly impersonating, falsely impersonating, harassing, telephoning, destroying personal property, contacting, coming within a specified distance of, or disturbing the peace of the other party, and, at the discretion of the court, on a showing of good cause, of other named family or household members. (Fam. Code, § 6320(a).)
- 6) Provides that “disturbing the peace of the other party,” for purposes of 5), refers to conduct that, based on the totality of the circumstances, destroys the mental or emotional calms of the other party, which includes, but is not limited to, coercive control; “coercive control” is a pattern of behavior that in purpose or effect unreasonably interferes with a person’s free will or personal liberty. (Fam. Code, § 6320(c).)
- 7) Provides that examples of coercive control include, but are not limited to, unreasonably engaging in any of the following:
 - a) Isolating the other party from friends, relatives, or other sources of support.
 - b) Depriving the other party of basic necessities.
 - c) Controlling, regulating, or monitoring the other party’s movements, communications, daily behavior, finances, economic resources, or access to services.
 - d) Compelling the other party by force, threat of force, or intimidation, including threats based on actual or suspected immigration status, to engage

in conduct from which the other party has a right to abstain, or to abstain from conduct in which the other party has a right to engage.

- e) Engaging in reproductive coercion, which consists of control over the reproductive autonomy of another through force, threat of force, or intimidation, and may include, but is not limited to, unreasonably pressuring the other party to become pregnant, deliberately interfering with contraception use or access to reproductive health information, or using coercive tactics to control, or attempt to control, pregnancy outcomes. (Fam. Code, § 6320(c)(1)-(5).)
- 8) Provides that a marriage is voidable and may be adjudged a nullity if specified conditions existed at the time of the marriage, including that the consent of either party was obtained by force, unless the party whose consent was obtained by force afterwards freely cohabitated with the other as their spouse. (Fam. Code, § 2210(e).)
- 9) Provides that a proceeding to obtain a judgment of nullity of marriage for a marriage in which consent was obtained by force must be brought:
 - a) Until January 1, 2027, within four years after the marriage.
 - b) Beginning January 1, 2027, within four years of the marriage, except that the court, upon a showing of good cause, may permit a party to proceed with the petition outside the expiration of the four-year statute of limitations. (Fam. Code, § 2211; AB 1134 (Bains, Ch. 633, Stats. 2025).)
- 10) Provides that it is a crime to compel another person, unlawfully, against their will, and by force, menace, or duress, to marry them or to marry another person, regardless of the age of the victim of the forced marriage at the time of the forced marriage. (Pen. Code, § 265.)

This bill:

- 1) Makes findings and declarations stating that forced marriage is a form of coercive control that falls within the protective purposes of the DVPA and the need for protections for victims of forced marriage under California law.
- 2) Adds, to the definition of “domestic violence” within the DVPA, abuse perpetrated against a party subjected to a forced marriage or an attempted forced marriage.

- 3) Defines “forced marriage” as a spousal relationship in which one or both parties do not or cannot consent and one or both parties are compelled, through force, fraud, coercion, duress, abuse of power, or coercive control, to enter, attempt to enter, or maintain a marriage, regardless of whether the marriage is legally valid; “forced marriage” constitutes abuse for purposes of the DVPA.
- 4) Provides that, if a DVPA order is sought to protect against a forced marriage, every person who engaged in conduct to arrange, officiate, finance, or facilitate the forced marriage or attempted force marriage may be included in one action as respondents.
- 5) Requires the DVPA to be liberally construed, and states that relief shall not be denied on the basis that the conduct is claimed to be customary, religious, cultural, or lawful in another jurisdiction, and that passage of time alone shall not bar relief.
- 6) Permits a court to grant a DVPA order regardless of whether a marriage has occurred or whether a purported marriage would be legally valid in this state or another jurisdiction.
- 7) Adds, to the list of examples of coercive control, interfering with, threatening, or attempting to prevent a party or witness from participating in court proceedings.
- 8) Provides that conduct taken to compel, attempt to compel, prepare for, or facilitate a forced marriage constitutes disturbing the peace of the other party; such conduct includes, but is not limited to:
 - a) Threats, intimidation, harassment, or abuse targeted at a person in an attempt to secure a marriage without consent.
 - b) Confiscating, withholding, or controlling passports, visas, identity documents, or travel documents.
 - c) Isolation, surveillance, restriction of movement or communication, or financial control.
 - d) Arranging, officiating, financing, or facilitating a forced marriage ceremony or related travel.
- 9) Provides that, in a DVPA case involving forced marriage or a credible risk of forced marriage, the court may issue an order otherwise authorized under the DVPA, including, but not limited to:

- a) An order prohibiting the arrangement, solemnization, or facilitation of a marriage involving the protected party without the party's consent.
- b) An order requiring the surrender to the court or return of passports, visas, or other travel or identity documents necessary to prevent removal of the protected party.
- c) An order necessary to ensure that a person is not removed from school or prevented from attending school, a medical or mental health appointment, a meeting with a service provider or attorney, an extracurricular activity, or other conduct to which the protected party has a right to engage.
- d) An order necessary to prevent the transportation of a person outside the jurisdiction for purposes related to a forced marriage.

Comments

Existing law, the DVPA, seeks to prevent acts of domestic violence, abuse, and sexual abuse and to provide for a separation of persons involved in the domestic violence for a period sufficient to enable these persons to try to resolve the causes of the violence. Existing law thus enables a party to seek a restraining order or a protective order to enjoin specific acts of abuse, exclude a person from a dwelling, or enjoin other specified behavior. The DVPA allows a victim of domestic violence to obtain a short-term temporary restraining order (TRO) on an ex parte basis and a longer-term protective order after a noticed hearing (DVPO); these orders are generally sought in a single application that seeks the immediate issuance of a TRO and a hearing on the application for the protective order.

This bill clarifies that the DVPA extends to protect against a planned forced marriage and to protect victims of forced marriages that have already taken place. At a high level, forced marriage is already covered by the DVPA through prohibitions on violence, threats of violence, and coercive control, but this bill adds both clarity and guidance to the courts on the potential scope of a forced-marriage-related DVPA order.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: Yes

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, the fiscal effect is as follows:

Minor to modest costs to the Judicial Council to modify and adopt new forms to incorporate forced marriage into the DVRO process.

Minor to modest costs to trial courts for additional DVRO filings and hearings. Many potential petitioners may already qualify for a DVRO under existing law, so it is unclear how many filings would be entirely new. DVRO hearings operate on tight statutory timeframes, and additional filings may result in some delays for other civil cases. While the courts are not funded on a workload basis, an increase in workload could result in delayed court services and would put pressure on the General Fund to fund additional staff and resources. The FY 2026–27 Budget appropriated \$70 million General Fund for this purpose (Trial Court Trust Fund, General Fund).

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/13/26)

Family Violence Law Center (co-source)
 Tahirih Justice Center (co-source)
 California Asian Pacific American Bar Association
 California Family Council
 California Partnership to End Domestic Violence
 Church State Council
 County of Santa Clara
 Family Violence Appellate Project
 Healthy Alternatives to Violent Environments
 Hilde B Foundation
 Maitri Bay Area
 Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California
 Rainbow Services
 Restraining Orders Without Borders
 Sexual Assault Advocacy Network
 The Adjacent Project
 Valor US
 Women's Foundation California
 Women's Liberation Front

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/13/26)

None received

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: According to the Tahirih Justice Center:

Forced marriage is a serious violation of human rights that often involves physical violence, sexual assault, and confinement. Without the specific protections provided by AB 2534, many survivors are left without a clear legal pathway to prevent these harms before they occur or to escape a forced

marriage after it has happened. The need for this bill is underscored by several alarming data points:

- **A Pervasive but Hidden Crisis:** Between 2009 and 2011, the Tahirih Justice Center— a sponsor of this bill— received reports of nearly 3,000 known or suspected cases of forced marriage in the United States.
- Many of these cases involved minors and young adults who were unable to access traditional legal remedies. Within this data were confirmed cases in California.
- **The Threat of International Abduction:** Forced marriage often involves “vacationing” survivors to other countries where they have fewer legal rights. According to the U.S. Department of State, once a survivor is taken across international borders and married, the ability of the U.S. government to intervene is severely limited. AB 2534 provides the preemptive, emergency authority needed to stop such an abduction before it begins.
- **Coercive Control and Overlapping Abuse:** Research indicates that forced marriage is rarely an isolated incident; it is almost always accompanied by coercive control, including financial abuse, physical threats, and reproductive coercion. Current California law does not explicitly list forced marriage as a basis for a Domestic Violence Restraining Order (DVRO), making it difficult for courts to provide comprehensive relief to these survivors.
- **Safety Upon Separation:** Data shows that separation is the most dangerous time for victims of domestic violence. For those attempting to flee a forced marriage, this risk is heightened by the involvement of extended family or community actors who may aid in the abuse and coercion and make it even harder to find a safe pathway out.

AB 2534 provides survivors with a robust “shield” by allowing the court to restrain every person involved in facilitating a forced marriage simultaneously to protect against these uniquely risky and harmful dynamics present in forced marriage cases.

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 69-0, 5/7/26

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher,

Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Ward, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NO VOTE RECORDED: Arambula, Bonta, Chen, Flora, Hart, Hoover, Petrie-Norris, Celeste Rodriguez, Valencia, Wallis, Wicks

Prepared by: Allison Whitt Meredith / JUD. / (916) 651-4113
8/14/26 14:07:07

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