
SENATE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Senator María Elena Durazo, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Pursuant to Rule 29.10(d)

Bill No: SB 1187
Author: Durazo
Version: 7/6/26

Hearing Date: 8/19/26
Fiscal: No
Consultant: Vargas, Peterson

OPEN MEETINGS.

Repeals language access requirements for local government meetings.

Background

Brown Act. The Ralph M. Brown Act establishes requirements for how local agencies must hold public meetings. Among other provisions, the Act requires meetings of the legislative body of a local agency be open and public. The Legislature originally enacted the Brown Act in 1953 and has since amended it numerous times. The Legislature expressly declared the intent of the Brown Act in its original statute, which remains unchanged today:

The Legislature finds and declares that the public commissions, boards and councils and other public agencies in this State exist to aid in the conduct of the people's business. It is the intent of the law that their actions be taken openly and that their deliberations be conducted openly. The people of this State do not yield their sovereignty to the agencies which serve them. The people, in delegating authority, do not give their public servants the right to decide what is good for the people to know and what is not good for them to know. The people insist on remaining informed so that they may retain control over the instruments they have created.

The Brown Act generally requires local agencies to notice meetings in advance, including the posting of an agenda, and requires these meetings to be open and accessible to the public. The Brown Act defines a "meeting" as "any congregation of a majority of the members of a legislative body at the same time and location (including teleconference locations) to hear, discuss, deliberate, or take action on any item that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the legislative body." The Brown Act applies not just to governing bodies of local agencies like a city council or county board of supervisors. It also applies to these other legislative bodies of a local agency:

- Bodies of a local agency, whether permanent or temporary, decisionmaking or advisory, created by charter, ordinance, resolution, or formal action of a legislative body;
- Standing committees of a legislative body, regardless of their composition, that have a continuing subject matter jurisdiction, or a meeting schedule fixed by charter, ordinance, resolution, or formal action of a legislative body; and
- Boards, commissions, committees, or other multimember bodies that govern a private corporation, limited liability company, or other entity that either is created by an elected

legislative body to exercise authority delegated to it, or receives funds from a local agency and the membership includes a full voting member from that legislative body.

The Brown Act lays out certain requirements for public participation. The legislative body cannot require members of the public to register or provide information as a condition of participation. The Brown Act also generally requires every agenda for meetings to provide an opportunity for the public to directly address the legislative body on any item of public interest, before or during its consideration of the item, within its jurisdiction. While the Brown Act requires local agencies to provide opportunities for public comment, it also allows local agencies to adopt reasonable regulations to carry out public participation requirements, such as limiting the amount of time for public testimony on each item and for each speaker. These restrictions must be content-neutral. For example, the local agency cannot restrict public criticism of its actions.

If a member of the public, including the respective district attorney, believes a local agency violated the Brown Act, they must first send an order to the local agency to correct the violation. If the local agency disagrees with the complaint and does not correct it, the submitter can pursue the complaint through the courts. If the court agrees with the complaint, outcomes range from invalidating certain actions of the local agency to a misdemeanor criminal conviction.

The Brown Act establishes minimum standards for public participation. It does not preclude a local agency from adopting procedures that provide greater opportunities for public comment or otherwise exceed those minimum requirements.

SB 707 (Durazo, 2025). SB 707 made various changes to modernize the Brown Act that expand teleconferencing flexibility for local officials, increase public participation, and expand language access.

Teleconferencing flexibility. SB 707 expands teleconferencing options for a legislative body of a local agency. SB 707 broadens the scope under which members may participate remotely without requiring a quorum to participate from locations within the local agency's jurisdiction, and authorizes subsidiary and multijurisdictional bodies to meet remotely on a recurring basis provided they maintain a physical location where the public can attend. SB 707 also establishes separate procedures for remote participation for just cause and during emergencies.

Public participation. SB 707 placed additional requirements on eligible legislative bodies for public participation and language access. Under SB 707, an eligible legislative body is:

- A city council or county board of supervisors with a city or county population of 30,000 or more;
- A city council of a city located within a county with a population of 600,000 or more;
- A board of directors of a special district that has over 200 full-time employees, has an internet website, and (1) covers the entirety of a county with a population of 600,000 or more; (2) has over 1,000 full-time employees; or (3) has annual revenues that exceed \$400 million dollars.

SB 707 requires an eligible legislative body to take the following actions to encourage residents, including those in underrepresented communities and non-English-speaking communities, to participate in public meetings:

- Provide remote participation options to the public. This must include either two-way telephonic service combined with live webcasting of the meeting, or a two-way audiovisual platform;
- Make a reasonable effort to invite groups that do not traditionally participate in public meetings, which may include media organizations, neighborhood, and community group organizations, among others;
- Have a system in place for electronically accepting and fulfilling requests for meeting agendas and documents pursuant to specified provisions of the Brown Act through email or through an integrated agenda management platform; and
- Create and maintain an accessible internet webpage dedicated to public meetings that includes and provides a link to a calendar of all public meetings, an explanation of the procedures for a member of the public to provide in person or remote oral public comment during a public meeting, and the agenda posted.

Language access. SB 707 also establishes minimum requirements for eligible legislative bodies to increase language access for non-English-speaking residents. Those requirements for eligible legislative bodies include:

- Reasonably assist members of the public who wish to translate a public meeting into any language or wish to receive interpretation provided by another member of the public, so long as the interpretation is not disruptive to the meeting;
- Arrange space for one or more interpreters at a meeting location;
- Allow extra time during the meeting for interpretation to occur;
- Ensure participants may use their personal equipment or reasonably access facilities for participants to access commercially available interpretation services;
- Translate meeting agendas into all applicable languages, and post each translation, including instructions on how to join the meeting by telephonic or internet based service and any requirements to register for public comment; and
- Provide a physical location that is freely accessible to the public in reasonable proximity to the physical location in which the agenda and translations are posted and allow members of the public to post additional translations of the agenda in that location.

SB 707 defines “applicable languages” to mean languages, according to data from the most recent American Community Survey, spoken jointly by 20% or more of the applicable population, provided that 20% or more of the population that speaks that language in that city or county speaks English less than “very well”, up to a maximum of three languages spoken in the jurisdiction.

SB 707’s provisions expanding language access and public participation became effective July 1, 2026.

Language access advocates have raised concerns that SB 707 imposes new uniform language access requirements on local agencies without sufficient consideration of local agency discretion and community-specific, language access needs. To address their concerns, the author wants to remove the language access provisions in the Brown Act.

Proposed Law

Senate Bill 1187 repeals SB 707’s language access provisions.

Comments

1. Purpose of the bill. According to the author, “Last year, I authored SB 707, which comprehensively modernized Ralph Brown Act rules for government bodies to improve transparency and allow public access to their governments. The bill allowed governments to better serve their communities, and increase the public’s access to meetings, especially for disabled, working, and non-English speaking communities.

“SB 707 included language access provisions related to the translation of agendas, additional languages, employed human translators, and conducting additional outreach, that became effective on July 1, 2026. Due to concerns from language access advocates, SB 1187 as recently amended removes the language access provisions, adds findings, and adds an urgency clause. Additionally, the recent amendments reduce costs for local governments.

“I am grateful to all the stakeholders who were a part of these critical historic conversations to ensure government bodies better serve their communities. Together, these legislative efforts took steps to strengthen our governments by creating robust meetings and empower our community members to be engaged and increase participation across the state.”

2. Home rule. SB 707 established a new statewide minimum standard for language access in public meetings. Language access advocates raised concerns about establishing a one-size-fits-all minimum for translation and interpretation services because it may not reflect local community needs. After conversations with language access advocates and local governments, stakeholders agreed on removing SB 707’s language access provisions, while retaining the other parts of SB 707 that expand public access to local agency meetings, such as the requirement for remote participation options for the public and outreach efforts to underrepresented communities. This approach returns decisions regarding translating agenda, interpretation, and related language-access services to the discretion of individual local governments. While this provides jurisdictions with flexibility to tailor language-access programs to local demographics and community needs, it would no longer ensure that eligible legislative bodies all meet or exceed a new, minimum standard for language access across the state.

3. Urgency. As an urgency statute, SB 1187 must be approved by 2/3 vote of each house of the Legislature. Regular legislation takes effect on January 1 following its passage, but urgency bills take effect as soon as they are passed, signed, and chaptered.

4. Senate Rule 29.10(d). As introduced in February 2026, SB 1187 defined the term “majority” for the purposes of local agency meeting laws. On June 22, 2026, the author amended the bill to remove those contents and rewrite the bill to remove the specified language access requirements from SB 707. Because this topic was never heard in the Senate, the Senate Rules Committee referred the amended bill under Senate Rule 29.10(d) to the Senate Local Government Committee for a hearing on the Assembly’s amendments. At its hearing, the Committee has four choices:

- Send the bill back to the Senate Floor, recommending concurrence.
- Send the bill back to the Senate Floor, recommending nonconcurrence.
- Send the bill back to the Senate Floor, without recommendation.
- Hold the bill.

Assembly Actions

Assembly Local Government Committee:	10-0
Assembly Floor:	73-0

Support and Opposition (8/19/26)

Support: California Municipal Clerks Association (CMCA)
California State Association of Counties (CSAC)
City of Chino Hills
City of Lakewood
City of Rohnert Park
League of California Cities
Marin County Council of Mayors and Council Members
Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC)
San Bernardino County
Urban Counties of California (UCC)

Opposition: None Submitted

-- END --