

SENATE THIRD READING

SB 1330 (Arreguín)

As Amended May 14, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Expands the list of professions for which an assault or battery of a person in that profession carries elevated misdemeanor penalties to include utility workers, as defined.

Major Provisions

- 1) Includes utility workers engaged in the performance of their duties in the list of professions against whom an assault or battery conviction carries elevated criminal penalties.
- 2) Makes an assault of, or battery against, a utility worker engaged in the performance of their duties, where the perpetrator knows or reasonably should know the victim is such a utility worker engaged in the performance of their duties, punishable by imprisonment of up to one year in county jail, up to a \$2,000 fine, or by both.
- 3) Defines "utility worker" to mean a person employed by, or who is a contractor to, an investor-owned or publicly owned water corporation, electrical corporation, gas corporation, electric cooperative, local publicly owned electric utility, as defined, or a public water system, as defined, that performs services for or delivers a commodity to the public or any portion thereof and the service performed by the person is the construction, alteration, demolition, installation, maintenance, or repair of water, electrical, or gas infrastructure.

COMMENTS**According to the Author**

"Our public utility workers play an important role in maintaining the infrastructure that communities rely on every day, including electricity and water services. While performing this essential work in the field, utility workers have reported incidents of harassment and assault that often create unsafe and stressful work environments, further complicating their ability to perform their duties. At least for one major utility employer, since 2022, 81 incidents have occurred in which weapons were brandished at their employees during work operations in the field. Like other classes of workers who already have protections against assault or battery under the State Penal Code (e.g. police officer, firefighter, nurse or doctor), public utility workers equally face threats to their safety when performing their essential work. SB 1330 seeks to provide our utility workers these same protections, ensuring that they can perform their work and service the public without fear."

Arguments in Support

According to the *International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local Union 1245*, a co-sponsor of this bill, "Despite the essential nature of their work, utility workers increasingly face threats, verbal harassment, and physical violence while performing their duties in the field. Just this past March, a crew of IBEW members assigned to perform routine work in El Dorado County was threatened and then assaulted by a resident. The assailant fired multiple shots at the crew, one of which struck a line worker in the arm. By sheer luck, no other IBEW members were

hurt. The same assailant then fired upon Sheriff's Deputies when they responded, injuring the Deputies as well...

"By clarifying that assault or battery against a utility worker engaged in their duties is subject to enhanced penalties, SB 1330 sends a strong and necessary message: violence against workers who maintain California's critical infrastructure will not be tolerated. The bill will help deter harmful conduct, promotes worker safety, and ensures that those who keep essential services running can do their jobs without fear of attack.

"Importantly, SB 1330 applies to a range of utility workers, including those involved in the construction, installation, maintenance, and repair of water, electrical, and gas infrastructure, whether employed directly by utilities or working as contractors. This comprehensive definition reflects the modern utility workforce and ensures that all individuals performing this essential work are afforded equal protection. This comprehensive definition reflects the modern utility workforce and ensures that all individuals performing this essential work are afforded equal protection."

Arguments in Opposition

According to *Courage California*, "Existing laws already provide penalties for assault and battery against all individuals, regardless of their profession. Carving out additional categories of protected workers creates a tiered system of justice that undermines the principle of equal protection under the law. Public utility employees, like all individuals, deserve safety and security in their workplace, but enhancing penalties for crimes against one group over another leads to inequitable outcomes in our criminal justice system..."

"California's history with tough-on-crime policies demonstrates that escalating penalties do not improve public safety. Instead, they contribute to costly mass incarceration without preventing harmful behavior. SB 1330 follows this flawed path. Increasing jail time for individuals who cause harm to public utility workers will not prevent such incidents and may worsen community relations with utility providers.

"When Governor Brown vetoed a similar bill, AB 172 (Rodriguez) [of] 2015), he stated: "If there were evidence that an additional six months in county jail (three months, once good-time credits are applied) would enhance the safety of these workers or serve as a deterrent, I would sign this bill. I doubt that it would do either. We need to find more creative ways to protect the safety of these critical workers. This bill isn't the answer." This reasoning holds equally true today, SB 1330 is not the answer."

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

- 1) Potential court cost pressures of an unknown, but potentially significant amount (Trial Court Trust Fund (TCTF), General Fund (GF)). By elevating the maximum punishment for assault and battery of a utility worker from six months to one year in county jail, this bill could result in lengthier and more complex criminal proceedings. Actual costs will depend on the number of persons charged and the circumstances of each case. Although courts are not funded on a workload basis, increased workload creates pressure on the GF to backfill the TCTF. The 2025-26 budget included \$117.3 million GF to backfill the TCTF for trial court operations.

- 2) Potential non-reimbursable local incarceration costs of an unknown amount (local funds). By extending the maximum jail term for these offenses from six months to one year, this bill could increase county jail commitments and lengths of stay. The average annual cost to incarcerate a person in county jail is approximately \$29,000. Actual costs will depend on the number of convictions and sentences imposed. County incarceration costs are not subject to reimbursement by the state. However, overcrowding in county jails creates cost pressure on the General Fund because the state has historically granted new funding to counties to offset overcrowding resulting from public safety realignment.

VOTES

SENATE FLOOR: 39-0-1

YES: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, 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: Dahle

ASM PUBLIC SAFETY: 9-0-0

YES: Schultz, Alanis, Mark González, Haney, Harabedian, Lackey, Nguyen, Ramos, Sharp-Collins

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-0

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

UPDATED

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