
UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Bill No: SB 50
Author: Ashby (D)
Amended: 9/3/25
Vote: 21

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE: 13-0, 4/1/25

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

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 6-0, 5/23/25

AYES: Caballero, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

NO VOTE RECORDED: Dahle

SENATE FLOOR: 38-0, 6/4/25

AYES: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Grove, Hurtado, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

NO VOTE RECORDED: Reyes, Strickland

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 79-0, 9/8/25 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Connected devices: device protection requests

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: This bill requires account managers of connected devices to provide a process for survivors or their representatives to terminate or disable perpetrators' access to such devices through a "device protection request" with specified documentation from survivors of "covered acts," as defined.

Assembly Amendments loosen the obligations imposed on account managers by the bill.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Criminalizes conduct amounting to false imprisonment and human trafficking. (Penal (Pen.) Code § 236 et seq.)
- 2) Criminalizes conduct amounting to rape, duress, and other unlawful sexual conduct, including prostitution and abduction. (Pen. Code § 261 et seq.)
- 3) Authorizes a court to issue an ex parte order enjoining a party from molesting, attacking, striking, stalking, threatening, sexually assaulting, battering, credibly impersonating, falsely personating, harassing, telephoning, including, but not limited to, making annoying telephone calls, destroying personal property, contacting, either directly or indirectly, by mail or otherwise, coming within a specified distance of, or disturbing the peace of the other party. “Disturbing the peace of the other party” refers to conduct that, based on the totality of the circumstances, destroys the mental or emotional calm of the other party. This conduct may be committed directly or indirectly, including through the use of a third party, and by any method or through any means including, but not limited to, telephone, online accounts, text messages, internet-connected devices, or other electronic technologies. (Family (Fam.) Code § 6320.)
- 4) Authorizes an adult person, or a parent or guardian on behalf of a minor or an incapacitated person, to apply to participate in the Safe at Home program by stating that they are a victim of specified conduct, including domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, human trafficking, child abduction, or elder or dependent adult abuse, or is a household member of a victim, designating the Secretary of State (SOS) as the agent for service of process and receipt of mail, and providing the SOS with any address they wish to be kept confidential. (Government Code § 6206(a).)

This bill:

- 1) Authorizes a survivor, or a designated representative of a survivor, to submit a device protection request to an account manager seeking to terminate a perpetrator’s access to a connected device or associated user account that includes certain required documentation.
- 2) Requires an account manager to offer a survivor the ability to submit a device protection request through secure remote means that are easily navigable.

Except as specified, an account manager shall not require a specific form of documentation to submit a device protection request.

- 3) Requires an account manager, commencing no later than two business days after receiving a device protection request from a survivor to terminate or disable access to a perpetrator, as identified in the request, or to inform the survivor of any methods to reset the device.
- 4) Prohibits an account manager from conditioning a device protection request upon specified conditions, including payment or any other limitations or requirements not specifically listed.
- 5) Requires an account manager, as specified, to treat any information submitted by a survivor as confidential and to securely dispose of the information not later than 90 days after receiving it. This shall not be construed to prohibit an account manager from maintaining, for longer than the period specified, a record that verifies that a survivor fulfilled the conditions of a device protection request.
- 6) Defines the relevant terms.
- 7) Deems a perpetrator that maintains or exercises device or account access, including by disturbing the peace of the other party, as described in subdivision (c) of Section 6320 of the Family Code, despite having their device or account access denied in violation hereof.
- 8) Authorizes actions to be brought by any person injured by a violation or in the name of the people of the State of California by the Attorney General, a district attorney, county counsel, a city attorney, or a city prosecutor.
- 9) Authorizes a court to enjoin a person or entity who engages, has engaged, or proposes to engage in a violation hereof. The court may make any orders or judgments as may be necessary to prevent a violation of this chapter.
- 10) Provides that a person or entity who engages, has engaged, or proposes to engage in a violation shall be liable for a civil penalty not to exceed \$2,500 per violation for each connected device in violation, to be distributed as specified.
- 11) Prohibits any waiver of these provisions and clarifies that the duties and obligations imposed are cumulative with any other duties or obligations

imposed under other law, and shall not be construed to relieve any party from any duties or obligations imposed under other law. The remedies or penalties are cumulative to each other and to the remedies or penalties available under all other laws of the state.

- 12) Exempts any entity that is subject to the federal Safe Connections Act of 2022 or regulations of the Federal Communications Commission.
- 13) Includes a severability clause.
- 14) Amends the definition of “disturbing the peace of the other party” for purposes of securing a restraining order to include conduct committed through a connected device.

Background

Domestic violence can take many forms, but generally involve a pattern of behaviors by an abuser to gain and maintain power and control over a victim. This can involve emotional abuse, intimidation, economic abuse, coercion and threats, and physical or sexual violence. Abusers can assert control over economic resources, children, and modes of transportation. Escaping domestic violence is often harrowing and beset by fear of being caught or found by the abuser.

With the near ubiquitous nature of connected devices and attendant tracking mechanisms, a new tool for abusers to maintain power and control has caused alarm among survivors and advocates. Research and reporting finds that abusers are increasingly using connected devices in homes and other consumer products to harass and terrify their victims even after they have managed to escape.

This bill requires a mechanism for survivors of “covered acts” to regain control of these devices. These acts include false imprisonment, human trafficking, and other sexual crimes. Upon receipt of specified documentation, including verification that a covered act has allegedly been committed against the survivor and verification of the survivor’s exclusive possession or control of the device, account managers, those in control of device access, must grant a device protection request, essentially denying the perpetrator access to the connected device, or provide information on available means to reset the device, as provided. This bill is author-sponsored and supported by several groups, including Oakland Privacy. No timely opposition has been received. For a more thorough overview, please see the Senate Judiciary Committee analysis of the bill.

Comment

According to the author:

SB 50 requires companies to swiftly cut off access to shared accounts, applications, and devices, offering immediate protections for domestic violence victims when proper documentation is provided. This is a necessary measure that addresses the increasingly prevalent problem of digital abuse and control in domestic violence cases.

Domestic violence organizations continue to raise concerns about the increasing number of abuse cases related to internet-connected devices and shared accounts. Victims report escalating issues of virtual abuse, including loss of autonomy over everyday household items such as doors, speakers, thermostats, lights, and cameras. While modern technology offers convenience and connectivity, it has unfortunately become a tool for perpetrators to exert control over their victims remotely.

SB 50 addresses the urgent need to stop this alarming new trend. This bill empowers victims and provides a crucial layer of protection. It ensures that California law evolves alongside technological advancements, empowering and safeguarding victims of domestic violence.

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

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

Cost pressures to the state funded trial court system (Trial Court Trust Fund, General Fund) to process and adjudicate civil violations brought under this bill.

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

- Possible costs (General Fund, special funds) to the Department of Justice (DOJ) of an unknown amount. Actual costs will depend on whether the Attorney General pursues enforcement actions, and, if so, the level of additional staffing DOJ needs to handle the related workload. If DOJ hires staff to handle enforcement actions authorized by this bill, it would incur significant costs, likely in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars annually at a minimum. Additionally, DOJ anticipates costs of \$88,000 in fiscal year (FY) 2025-26 and \$167,000 in FY 2026-27 and ongoing for one new

permanent analyst in its Victim Services Unit. DOJ reports the analyst will provide subject matter expertise, help survivors navigate the request process established in the bill, and act as a liaison for survivors and their families, local level victim services agencies, law enforcement agencies.

- Cost pressures (Trial Court Trust Fund, General Fund) of an unknown but potentially significant amount to the courts to adjudicate civil enforcement cases. Actual costs will depend on the number of cases filed and the amount of court time needed to resolve each case. It generally costs approximately \$1,000 to operate a courtroom for one hour. Although courts are not funded on the basis of workload, increased pressure on the Trial Court Trust Fund may create a demand for increased funding for courts from the General Fund. The fiscal year 2025-26 state budget provides \$82 million ongoing General Fund to the Trial Court Trust Fund for court operations.

SUPPORT: (Verified 9/8/25)

3strands Global Foundation
Alliance for Hope International
California District Attorneys Association
Family Violence Appellate Project
Oakland Privacy
Sacramento Regional Family Justice Center
San Francisco Safehouse
Secure Justice

OPPOSITION: (Verified 9/8/25)

None received

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: Oakland Privacy states:

IoT devices' come into people's homes with the benign appeal of improving lives but these devices can easily and covertly be weaponized to surveil without an individual's consent or knowledge. Moreover, an abuser may even coerce a victim into being surveilled and to voluntarily give up their personal privacy in an abusive relationship. Protections should shift the burden from victims that require them to be technologically savvy, or to avoid using technology – in which there are probably instances that victims are unaware of connected devices - to general privacy protection measures by design such as data minimization, storage and sharing to increase the overall

safety of IOT devices. In addition to regulation like SB 50, technology developers should take into account the privacy of all users - active and passive - of their devices and recognize the fluid relationships and even enmeshment of various people interacting with their devices. Enacting proactive measures will help curb victim-blaming perspectives, and will shift some of the burden from survivors to those building and deploying these technologies - by fostering tech that is designed with safety protections from the outset. An easily implementable requirement would be to have companies add information and warnings about potential misuse in owners manuals, as is done for Apple Air Tags. This bill will help with reducing public safety interventions in domestic violence situations and potentially de-escalate potential acts of conflict, confrontation and violence.

Ayes: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

Noes:

No Vote Recorded: Nguyen

Prepared by: Christian Kurpiewski / JUD. / (916) 651-4113
9/8/25 19:46:35

**** END ****