
UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Bill No: SB 627
Author: Wiener (D), Arreguín (D), Pérez (D) and Wahab (D), et al.
Amended: 9/5/25
Vote: 21

PRIOR SENATE VOTES NOT RELEVANT

SENATE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE: 5-1, 9/11/25
AYES: Arreguín, Caballero, Gonzalez, Pérez, Wiener
NOES: Seyarto

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 45-23, 9/9/25 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Law enforcement: masks

SOURCE: Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice
Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund
Prosecutors Alliance California

DIGEST: This bill makes it a crime for a law enforcement officer, as defined, to wear a facial covering in the performance of the duties, except as specified, and requires any law enforcement agency operating in California to maintain and publicly post a written policy limiting the use of facial coverings, as specified.

Assembly Amendments remove provisions unrelated to this bill and inserted provisions related to law enforcement facial coverings.

ANALYSIS:

Existing federal law:

- 1) Provides that the U.S. Constitution, and the laws of the United States, are the supreme law of the land. (U.S. Const., art. VI, cl. 2.)
- 2) Provides that the federal government has the exclusive authority to regulate immigration and naturalization. (U.S. Const., Art. 1, Sec. 8.)

- 3) Provides that the powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people, and prohibits the federal government from “conscripting” the states to enforce federal regulatory programs. (U.S. Const. Amend 10.)
- 4) Prohibits a federal, state, or local government entity or official from prohibiting, or in any way restricting, any government entity or official from sending to, or receiving from, the Immigration and Naturalization Service information regarding the citizenship or immigration status, lawful or unlawful, of any individual. (8 U.S.C. §§ 1373, 1644.)
- 5) Requires designated immigration officers, at the time of arrest, and as soon as it is practical and safe to do so, to identify themselves as an immigration officer who is authorized to execute an arrest and state that the person is under arrest and the reason for the arrest. (8 C.F.R. § 287.8 (c)(2)(iii).)

Existing state law:

- 1) Establishes the California Values Act, which prohibits specified state and local LEAs from using agency or department money or personnel to investigate, interrogate, detain, detect, or arrest persons for immigration enforcement purposes, subject to specified exemptions. (Government (Gov.) Code, §§ 7282.5, 7284.6.)
- 2) Defines “immigration enforcement” for purposes of the California Values Act, to mean any and all efforts to investigate, enforce, or assist in the investigation or enforcement of any federal civil immigration law, and also includes any and all efforts to investigate, enforce, or assist in the investigation or enforcement of any federal criminal immigration law that penalizes a person’s presence in, entry, or reentry to, or employment in, the U.S. (Gov. Code, § 7284.4, subd. (f).)
- 3) Requires uniformed police officers to wear a badge, nameplate, or other device which bears clearly on its face the identification number or name of the officer. (Penal (Pen.) Code, § 830.10.)
- 4) Makes willfully wearing, exhibiting, or using the authorized uniform, insignia, emblem, device, label, certificate card, or writing, of a peace officer, a member of the fire department, deputy fire marshal or search and rescue personnel, with the intent of fraudulently impersonating them or of fraudulently inducing the belief that the defendant is one of them, or who willfully and credibly impersonates that person on an internet website or by other electronic means for

the purpose of defrauding another, a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment in county jail for up to six months, by a fine of \$1,000, or both. (Pen. Code, §§ 538d, subd. (a); 538e, subd. (a); 538h, subd. (a); Pen. Code, § 19.)

- 5) Makes wearing any mask, false whiskers, or any personal disguise for the purpose of evading or escaping discovery, recognition, or identification in the commission of a public offense, or for concealment, flight, or escape, when charged with, or arrested for, a public offense a misdemeanor, punishable by imprisonment in county jail for up to six months, by a fine of \$1,000, or both. (Pen. Code, §§ 19, 185.)

This bill:

- 1) Provides that by July 1, 2026, a law enforcement agency, as defined, operating in California shall maintain and publicly post a written policy regarding the use of facial coverings, which shall include, but not be limited to, each of the following:
- a) A purpose statement affirming the agency's commitment to all of the following:
 - i. Transparency, accountability, and public trust.
 - ii. Restricting the use of facial coverings to specific, clearly defined, and limited circumstances.
 - iii. The principle that generalized and undifferentiated fear and apprehension about officer safety shall not be sufficient to justify the use of facial coverings.
 - b) A requirement that all sworn personnel not use a facial covering when performing their duties.
 - c) A list of narrowly tailored exemptions for the following:
 - i. Active undercover operations or assignments authorized by supervising personnel or court order.
 - ii. Tactical operations where protective gear is required for physical safety.
 - iii. Applicable law governing occupational health and safety.
 - iv. Protection of identity during prosecution.

- v. Applicable law governing reasonable accommodations.
 - d) Opaque facial coverings shall only be used when no other reasonable alternative exists and the necessity is documented.
 - e) Pursuant to the policy, a supervisor shall not knowingly allow a peace officer under their supervision to violate state law or agency policy limiting the use of a facial covering.
- 2) Provides that an agency policy regarding facial coverings shall be deemed consistent with the other provisions of this bill unless a verified written challenge to its legality is submitted to the head of the agency by a member of the public, an oversight body, or a local governing authority, at which time the agency shall be afforded 90 days to correct any deficiencies in the policy.
 - 3) Provides that if, after 90 days, the agency has failed to adequately address the complaint, the complaining party may proceed to a court of competent jurisdiction for a judicial determination of the agency's exemption to the facial covering prohibition below.
 - 4) Provides that the agency's policy and its employees' exemptions shall remain in effect unless a court rules the agency's policy is not in compliance with this bill's policy requirement and all appeals to higher courts have been exhausted by the agency.
 - 5) Defines the following terms for the purposes of the policy requirement:
 - a) "Facial covering" has the same meaning as specified on page 5 below.
 - b) "Law enforcement agency" means any of the following:
 - i. Any entity of a city, county, or other local agency, that employs a peace officer, as defined in existing law.
 - ii. Any law enforcement agency of another state.
 - iii. Any federal law enforcement agency.
 - 6) Prohibits any law enforcement officer from wearing a facial covering that conceals or obscures their facial identity in the performance of their duties.
 - 7) Defines "face covering" as any opaque mask garment, helmet, headgear or other item that conceals or obscures the facial identity of an individual,

including, but not limited to, a balaclava, tactical mask, gator, ski mask, and any similar type of facial covering or face-shielding item.

8) Specifies that a “face covering” does not include any of the following:

- a) A translucent face shield or clear mask that does not conceal the wearer’s facial identity and is used in compliance with the employing agency’s policy adopted pursuant to this bill.
- b) An N95 medical mask or surgical mask to protect against transmission of disease or infection, or any other mask, helmet, or device necessary to protect against exposure to any toxin, gas, smoke, inclement weather or any other hazardous or harmful environmental condition, as specified.
- c) A mask, helmet, or device, including, but not limited to, a self-contained breathing apparatus, necessary for underwater use.

A motorcycle helmet when worn by an officer utilizing a motorcycle or other vehicle that requires a helmet for safe operations while in the performance of their duties.

- d) Eyewear necessary to protect from the use of retinal weapons, including, but not limited to, lasers.

9) Specifies that this prohibition does not apply to the following:

- a) An officer subject to one or more of the exemptions to the masking policy listed on page 4, above.
- b) An officer assigned to Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team units while actively performing their SWAT responsibilities.

10) Defines “law enforcement officer,” for the purposes of this prohibition, as a peace officer, as defined under existing law, employed by a city, county or other local agency as well as any officer or agent of a federal law enforcement agency or any law enforcement agency of another state or any person acting on behalf of a federal law enforcement agency or law enforcement agency of another state.

11) Provides that the criminal penalty for a violation of the prohibition against the use of face coverings by law enforcement shall not apply to any law enforcement officer if they were acting in their capacity as an employee of the

agency and the agency maintains and publicly posts, no later than July 1, 2026 a written policy pursuant to this bill.

- 12) Provides that notwithstanding any other law, any person who is found to have committed an assault, battery, false imprisonment, false arrest, abuse of process, or malicious prosecution, while wearing a facial covering in a knowing and willful violation of this section shall not be entitled to assert any privilege or immunity for their tortious conduct against a claim of civil liability, and shall be liable to that individual for the greater of actual damages or statutory damages of not less than ten thousand dollars (\$10,000), whichever is greater.
- 13) Includes a severability clause.
- 14) Contains several legislative findings and declarations.

Comments

According to the Author, “SB 627 prohibits law enforcement at all levels from covering their faces while conducting operations in the state of California unless they are wearing clear, medical or surgical coverings, or coverings necessary to protect against exposure hazardous environmental conditions. The recent federal operations in California have created an environment of profound terror, with officers — or people who claim to be officers — wearing what are essentially ski masks, not identifying themselves, grabbing people, putting them in unmarked cars, and disappearing them. If we want the public to trust law enforcement, we cannot allow them to behave like secret police in an authoritarian state. We would not trust a masked stranger to teach our kids, treat our wounds, or enter our homes. Law enforcement officers do critically important work to keep our communities safe, and when real officers are indistinguishable from imposters, everyone is at risk – including the officers themselves. Prohibiting law enforcement officers from wearing masks or personal disguises to hide their face boosts trust in law enforcement, which makes it easier for law enforcement to do their jobs and makes California safer for all of us.”

For a more in-depth discussion of this bill’s specific provisions, please see the policy committee analysis prepared by the Senate Committee on Public Safety.

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

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

- One-time costs to each state and local law enforcement agency to adopt the required policy regarding facial coverings (local funds, General Fund,

special funds). There are approximately 600 law enforcement agencies in California. These costs are unlikely to be significant for each agency, but in the aggregate statewide may be in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars one-time.

- To the extent there are prosecutions for misdemeanor violations of the prohibition on unauthorized facial coverings by law enforcement officers, there will be related cost pressures to the courts (Trial Court Trust Fund) to adjudicate the criminal charges and costs to the counties (local funds) to incarcerate people who are convicted. These actual cost pressures and costs will depend on the number of prosecutions and convictions. Since a law enforcement agency may avoid criminal liability for its officers by adopting a policy regarding use of facial coverings, as required by the bill, there may not be many criminal charges filed.
- Cost pressures (Trial Court Trust Fund, General Fund) to the courts to adjudicate civil actions for which defendants may not assert privileges or immunities as a result of this bill. Actual costs will depend on the number of actions and the amount of court time required by each action. 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 9/11/25)

Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice (co-source)

Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (co-source)

Prosecutors Alliance California (co-source)

ACLU California Action

All Voting Members of the North Westwood Neighborhood Council

Alliance for Boys and Men of Color

Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California

American Association of University Women – California

Bend the Arc: Jewish Action California

California Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

California Alliance for Youth and Community Justice

California Alliance of Child and Family Services

California Attorneys for Criminal Justice

California Civil Liberties Advocacy
California Community Foundation
California Democratic Party
California Faculty Association
California Public Defenders Association
California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, INC.
California School Employees Association
Californians for Safety and Justice
City of Alameda
City of Berkeley
City of Culver City
City of Los Angeles
City of Monterey Park
City of Oakland
City of Paramount
City of Pasadena
City of West Hollywood
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights
Comite Civico Del Valle, INC
County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors
Courage California
Culver City Democratic Club
Democratic Party of the San Fernando Valley
Drug Policy Alliance
Electronic Frontier Foundation
Ella Baker Center for Human Right
Felony Murder Elimination Project
Friends Committee on Legislation of California
Ikar
Indivisible CA Statestrong
Indivisible Westside Los Angeles
Initiate Justice
Initiate Justice Action
Jewish Community Relations Council of Sacramento
Jewish Family and Children's Services of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin
and Sonoma Counties
Justice2jobs Coalition
LA Defensa
Latino Community Foundation
Los Angeles County Democratic Party

Latino Legislative Caucus
National Police Accountability Project
National Union of Healthcare Workers
North Westwood Neighborhood Council
Partnership for Los Angeles Schools
Rubicon Programs
San Francisco Office of the Assessor-recorder
San Francisco Public Defender's Office
Santa Barbara Women's Political Committee
Santa Monica Democratic Club
SEIU California
Sister Warriors Freedom Coalition
Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange
Smart Justice California
Solano County Democratic Central Committee
The W. Haywood Burns Institute
UFCW - Western States Council
United Domestic Workers/AFSCME Local 3930
Vision Y Compromiso
Western Center on Law & Poverty

OPPOSITION: (Verified 9/11/25)

Arcadia Police Officers' Association
Association for Los Angeles Deputy Sheriffs
Association of Orange County Deputy Sheriffs
Brea Police Association
Burbank Police Officers' Association
California Association of Highway Patrolmen
California Association of School Police Chiefs
California Coalition of School Safety Professionals
California Fraternal Order of Police
California Narcotic Officers' Association
California Peace Officers Association
California Police Chiefs Association
California Reserve Peace Officers Association
California State Sheriffs' Association
California Statewide Law Enforcement Association
Carlsbad Citizens for Community Oversight (C2O)
City of Torrance
Claremont Police Officers Association

Corona Police Officers Association
Culver City Police Officers' Association
Fullerton Police Officers' Association
Long Beach Police Officers Association
Los Angeles School Police Management Association
Los Angeles School Police Officers Association
Murrieta Police Officers' Association
Newport Beach Police Association
Palos Verdes Police Officers Association
Peace Officers Research Association of California
Placer County Deputy Sheriffs' Association
Pomona Police Officers' Association
Riverside Police Officers Association
Riverside Sheriffs' Association
Sacramento County Deputy Sheriffs Association
San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department
San Diego County Sheriff's Office
Sheriff's Employee Benefits Association

ASSEMBLY: 45-23, 9/9/25

Ayes: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alvarez, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Caloza, Carrillo, Connolly, Elhawary, Fong, Gabriel, Garcia, Gipson, Mark González, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Jackson, Kalra, Lee, Lowenthal, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Ortega, Papan, Patel, Pellerin, Quirk-Silva, Celeste Rodriguez, Rogers, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Stefani, Valencia, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

Noes: Alanis, Ávila Farías, Castillo, Chen, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Ellis, Flora, Gallagher, Jeff Gonzalez, Hadwick, Hoover, Johnson, Lackey, Macedo, Pacheco, Patterson, Michelle Rodriguez, Sanchez, Ta, Tangipa, Wallis

No Vote Recorded: Arambula, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Calderon, Irwin, Krell, Nguyen, Petrie-Norris, Ramos, Ransom, Blanca Rubio, Soria

Prepared by: Alex Barnett / PUB. S. /
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