

Date of Hearing: August 5, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 891 (Cervantes) – As Amended May 14, 2026

Policy Committee: Public Safety

Vote: 9 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill establishes the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons Justice Program (MMIPJP) within, and under the discretion of, the Department of Justice (DOJ).

Specifically, this bill tasks the MMIPJP with the following:

- 1) Facilitating collaboration and acting as a liaison between tribal victims' families, tribal governments, and federal, tribal, state, and out-of-state law enforcement agencies regarding active and inactive cases involving missing and murdered indigenous people in California, including human trafficking cases.
- 2) Providing technical assistance to law enforcement agencies already engaged in investigating cases involving missing and murdered indigenous people in California.
- 3) Publishing data on the number of, and facts about, cases involving missing and murdered indigenous people in California, where appropriate.
- 4) Submitting, annually until January 1, 2029, a report to the Legislature regarding its fulfillment of the above duties, as specified.

FISCAL EFFECT:

Costs of up to \$3 million annually (General Fund) to DOJ to establish and operate the MMIPJP. DOJ reports the department cannot absorb these costs within existing budgeted resources and that implementation is dependent upon an appropriation. DOJ's estimate spans five divisions and approximately 14 positions, including research and data staff in the California Justice Statistics Center to collect, analyze, and publish MMIP data; a crime analyst in the Missing and Unidentified Persons Section; two special agent supervisors in the Division of Law Enforcement to act as liaisons with tribal governments and law enforcement agencies, plus associated vehicle costs; a dedicated victim advocate in the Victim Services Unit; and analyst and clerical staff in the Office of Native American Affairs to coordinate the program, conduct outreach, and draft the annual report. In addition, DOJ will face one-time IT costs of about \$578,000 to reprogram DOJ's missing persons database and the statewide crime reporting system so DOJ can capture and publish the tribal affiliation and foster care information the bill requires. DOJ's current estimate is somewhat higher than the department's estimate on the substantially similar SB 4 (Cervantes), of this legislative session, held on the suspense file in this committee, on which DOJ anticipated costs beginning at \$1.4 million and rising to approximately \$2.3 million ongoing for

nine positions. The increase appears attributable to requiring additional positions, particularly in the California Justice Statistics Center, and the one-time IT modifications tied to the new publication requirements. DOJ reports that its Research Services Branch would absorb related homicide and missing persons statistical workload through June 30, 2029, using limited-term resources provided in connection with SB 108 (Budget Act of 2024), but anticipates needing permanent funding for two research positions beginning July 1, 2029, when that funding expires.

COMMENTS:

1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

It is an unfortunate truth that across the United States, including in California, there is an ongoing crisis of persistent violence committed against Indigenous people, especially women and girls. ... This bill will help provide a coordinated state response to MMIP cases, as well as shine a light on a crisis affecting our Indigenous communities that has not received nearly the attention it deserves.

2) **Background.** According to the Sovereign Bodies Institute, which began tracking MMIP cases in California in 2015, approximately 18 new cases are documented per year across 42 of the state's 58 counties, and according to the bill's sponsor, the Yurok Tribe, California has the largest Native American population in the country and ranks fifth in the nation in MMIP cases. A 2018 Urban Indian Health Institute report found striking inconsistencies among community, law enforcement, and media understandings of the scale of this violence, attributable to underreporting, racial misclassification, poor record-keeping, and strained relationships between law enforcement and Native communities.

Existing efforts address portions of the problem. At the federal level, Savanna's Act directs the U.S. Department of Justice to develop law enforcement protocols, training, and data reporting for cases involving missing or murdered Native Americans. At the state level, AB 3099 (Ramos), Chapter 170, Statutes of 2020, requires DOJ to provide technical assistance to local law enforcement and tribal governments on policing and criminal investigations on Indian lands, and AB 1314 (Ramos), Chapter 476, Statutes of 2022, established the Feather Alert. The Budget Act of 2022 also established the MMIP Grant Program, administered by the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC), which awards competitive grants to federally recognized tribes to identify, publicize, and investigate and solve MMIP cases; BSCC awarded \$12.93 million in the program's third cohort in July 2025, bringing total MMIP grant funding to over \$35 million statewide.

This bill is substantially similar to SB 4 (Cervantes), of this legislative session, which was held on this committee's suspense file, and AB 2279 (Cervantes), 2023-24 Legislative Session, which the Governor vetoed, citing duplication with the MMIP Grant Program and its creation of a new, unfunded grant program outside the budget. Unlike AB 2279, this bill does not create a grant program. This bill establishes a permanent coordination program within DOJ to act as a liaison between tribal victims' families, tribal governments, and law enforcement agencies on active and inactive MMIP cases, provide technical assistance to agencies investigating those cases, publish case data, and report annually to the Legislature through January 1, 2029.