

SENATE THIRD READING
SB 891 (Cervantes)
As Amended August 13, 2026
Majority vote

SUMMARY

Establishes a Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons Justice Program (MMIPJP) within the Department of Justice (DOJ) that would impose certain responsibilities, including facilitating collaboration and acting as a liaison between tribal entities and federal, tribal, state, and out-of-state law enforcement agencies.

Major Provisions

- 1) Establishes MMIPJP and states the program shall have all of the following responsibilities:
 - a) Facilitate collaboration and act as a liaison between tribal victims' families, tribal governments, and federal, tribal, state, and out-of-state law enforcement agencies, where appropriate, regarding active and inactive cases involving missing and murdered indigenous persons in California, including cases involving human trafficking;
 - b) Provide technical assistance to law enforcement agencies already engaged in investigating cases involving missing and murdered indigenous persons in California, including cases of human trafficking; and,
 - c) Publish data on the number of, and facts about, cases involving missing and murdered indigenous persons in California, where appropriate, and beginning on January 1, 2030.
- 2) Publications of facts as required above shall include all of the following information, as applicable, about the missing or murdered indigenous person:
 - a) General demographic information, including the age, gender, race, and ethnicity of the person;
 - b) Any tribal affiliation; and,
 - c) Any history in the foster care system.
- 3) Requires submission of an annual report, beginning July 1, 2030, to both houses of the Legislature containing all of the following:
 - a) The cases DOJ acted as a liaison and provided technical assistance to law enforcement, as defined;
 - b) The information published on cases involving missing and murdered indigenous persons in California, as defined; and,
 - c) An analysis of all appropriate data, and any recommendations to assist or improve upon necessary collaboration and coordination between local, state, and tribal governments in addressing missing and murdered indigenous persons in California.

- 4) Provides that the requirement for submitting a report is inoperative on and after January 1, 2033.

COMMENTS

Background: In 2018, UIHI published a report "aimed at assessing the number and dynamics of cases of missing and murdered American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls in cities across the United States." In its report, UIHI cited National Crime Information Center data that noted 5,712 reports of missing American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls made in 2016, although the United States Department of Justice's (U.S. DOJ) federal missing persons database only had 116 cases. That discrepancy as well as the lack of research on rates of violence among American Indian and Alaska Native women living in urban areas—where nearly three quarters of the Indigenous population lives—led UIHI to conduct its study.

In describing its methodology to collect data on cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, the UIHI stated:

As demonstrated by the findings of this study, reasons for the lack of quality data include underreporting, racial misclassification, poor relationships between law enforcement and American Indian and Alaska Native communities, poor record-keeping protocols, institutional racism in the media, and a lack of substantive relationships between journalists and American Indian and Alaska Native communities. In an effort to collect as much case data as possible and to be able to compare the five data sources used, UIHI collected data from Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests to law enforcement agencies, state and national missing persons databases, searches of local and regional news media online archives, public social media posts, and direct contact with family and community members who volunteered information on missing or murdered loved ones.

The report concluded:

UIHI discovered a striking level of inconsistency between community, law enforcement, and media understandings of the magnitude of this violence. If this report demonstrates one powerful conclusion, it is that if we rely solely on law enforcement or media for an awareness or understanding of the issue, we will have a deeply inaccurate picture of the realities, minimizing the extent to which our urban American Indian and Alaska Native sisters experience this violence. This inaccurate picture limits our ability to address this issue at policy, programing, and advocacy levels.

SB 891 seeks to address some of the issues outlined in the report.

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 levied committed against Indigenous people, especially women and girls. The Sovereign Bodies Institute (SBI) began tracking the number of murdered and missing Indigenous people (MMIP) in California in 2015 and found that there are approximately 18 new MMIP cases documented per year. Cases were documented in 42 of California's 58 counties. According to SBI, 91 percent of murdered and missing Indigenous children in Southern California are girls, and the lack of thematic issues among these cases suggests these girls are targeted because they are both Indigenous and girls."

"Senate Bill 891, a reintroduction of my Senate Bill 4 from 2025 and Assembly Bill 2279 from 2024, will continue this effort by establishing the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons Justice Program within the Department of Justice. The Program would be empowered to facilitate collaboration and act as a liaison between tribal victims' families; tribal governments; and state, federal, and out-of-state law enforcement agencies. The Program would also provide technical advice to law enforcement agencies investigating MMIP cases in California when appropriate. Finally, to further improve transparency regarding the ongoing MMIP crisis, the Program would be required to publish data on the number of MMIP cases and facts about those cases, as well as submit an annual report to the Legislature. 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."

Arguments in Support

According to the *Yurok Tribe*, "We wish to express our strong support and sponsorship for your Senate Bill 891. This important bill will establish a Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons Justice Program within the Department of Justice. This bill is a necessary and overdue step toward addressing the persistent crisis of violence against Indigenous people and ensuring justice for missing and murdered Indigenous persons."

"Indigenous communities across California continue to face disproportionately high rates of violence. More than four in five American Indian and Alaska Native women have experienced violence in their lifetime, and California ranks fifth in the nation for MMIP cases. Systemic failures—ranging from chronic underfunding to gaps in jurisdictional coordination—have left too many cases unresolved and too many families without answers."

"Currently, California has the largest Native American population in the country with nearly 109 federally recognized tribes. Specifically, California is home to over 700,000 Native American and Alaska Native people. Unfortunately, among the states, California also ranks fifth in terms of the number of cases of missing and murdered Indigenous people (MMIP)."

"SB 891 provides a critical framework for addressing these challenges. By creating a dedicated MMIP Justice Program, this bill will improve coordination between tribal, state, and federal law enforcement agencies; enhance data collection and case tracking; and serve as a crucial resource for victims' families. The Program would also assist in investigating MMIP cases in California when appropriate, including human trafficking cases. Finally, to further improve transparency regarding the ongoing MMIP crisis, the Program would be required to publish data on the number of MMIP cases and facts about those cases, as well as submit an annual report to the Legislature."

"SB 891 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. For this reason, we stand in strong support and sponsorship of your Senate Bill 891. We thank you for working to further address the ongoing MMIP crisis affecting Indigenous communities across California."

Arguments in Opposition

None submitted.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, "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."

VOTES

SENATE FLOOR: 39-0-1

YES: 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, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Reyes, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

ABS, ABST OR NV: Niello

ASM PUBLIC SAFETY: 9-0-0

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

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 11-0-4

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

ABS, ABST OR NV: Hoover, Dixon, Ta, Tangipa

UPDATED

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CONSULTANT: Dustin Weber / PUB. S. / (916) 319-3744

FN: 0003555