

SENATE THIRD READING
SB 937 (Gonzalez)
As Amended August 20, 2026
Majority vote

SUMMARY

Prohibits law enforcement officers from using flash-bang grenades to disperse any assembly, protest, or demonstration, except as specified.

Major Provisions

- 1) Prohibits the use of flash-bang grenades by any law enforcement agency for the purposes of dispersing any assembly, protest, or demonstration, and requires that flash-bangs only be deployed for crowd control by a peace officer that has received training on their proper use by the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) for crowd control or special weapons and tactics certified by an equivalent entity or training facility, if the use is objectively reasonable to defend against a threat to life or serious bodily injury to any individual, including any peace officer, or to bring an objectively dangerous and unlawful situation safely and effectively under control, and only in accordance with all of the following requirements:
 - a) De-escalation techniques or other alternatives to force have been attempted, when objectively reasonable, and have failed.
 - b) Repeated, audible announcements are made announcing the intent to use kinetic energy projectiles, flash bang grenades, and chemical agents and the type to be used, when objectively reasonable to do so. The announcements shall be made from various locations, if necessary, and delivered in multiple languages, if appropriate.
 - c) Persons are given an objectively reasonable opportunity to disperse and leave the scene.
 - d) An objectively reasonable effort has been made to identify persons engaged in violent acts and those who are not, and flash-bang grenades are targeted toward those individuals engaged in violent acts. Projectiles shall not be aimed indiscriminately into a crowd or group of persons.
 - e) Flash-bang grenades are used only with the frequency, intensity, and in a manner that is proportional to the threat and objectively reasonable.
 - f) Officers shall minimize the possible incidental impact of their use of flash-bang grenades on bystanders, medical personnel, journalists, or other unintended targets.
 - g) An objectively reasonable effort has been made to extract individuals in distress.
 - h) Medical assistance is promptly provided, if properly trained personnel are present, or procured, for injured persons, when it is reasonable and safe to do so.
 - i) Flash-bang grenades shall not be aimed at the head, neck, or any other vital organs.

- j) Flash-bang grenades shall not be used by any law enforcement agency solely due to any of the following:
 - i) A violation of an imposed curfew.
 - ii) A verbal threat.
 - iii) Noncompliance with a law enforcement directive.
 - k) Only a commanding officer at the scene of the assembly, protest or demonstration may authorize the use of flash-bang grenades.
- 2) Provides that the above does not relieve a peace officer of any required training on the use of kinetic energy projectiles, flash-bang grenades, and chemical agents in any other circumstance outside of crowd control.
 - 3) Provides that flash-bang grenades shall not be used by any law enforcement agency for the purposes of immigration enforcement, unless done as part of a joint law enforcement task force.
 - 4) Defines "flash-bang grenades" as any less-than-lethal explosive or pyrotechnic devices that are deployed by hand or as projectiles and that produce a bright flash and loud noise intended to temporarily stun, distract, effect an arrest, or disperse a gathering of people. Flash-bang grenades include, but are not limited to, explosive or pyrotechnic devices that also emit chemical agents, kinetic energy projectiles, or shrapnel, or that are commonly referred to as blast balls, sting balls, stinger grenades, noise flash diversionary devices, concussion grenades, or stun grenades.
 - 5) Defines "law enforcement agency" as any of the following:
 - a) Any department or agency of the state or any local government, special district, or other political subdivision thereof, that employs any peace officer, as defined.
 - b) Any federal law enforcement agency
 - 6) Expands existing prohibitions against the use of kinetic energy projectiles and chemical agents to federal law enforcement agencies.
 - 7) Requires each law enforcement agency, within 60 days of each incident, to publish a summary on its internet website of all instances in which a peace officer employed by that agency uses a flash-bang grenade for crowd control. Authorizes an agency to extend that period for 30 days if they demonstrate just cause, but in no case longer than 90 days from the time of the incident.
 - 8) Specifies that for each incident reported, the summary is limited to that information known to the agency at the time of the report and includes only the following:
 - a) A description of the assembly, protest, demonstration, or incident, including the approximate crowd size and the number of officers involved.
 - b) The type of flash-bang grenade deployed.

- c) The number of flash-bang grenades deployed, as applicable.
 - d) The number of documented injuries as a result of the flash-bang grenade deployment.
 - e) The justification for using the flash-bang grenade, including any de-escalation tactics or protocols and other measures that were taken at the time of the event to de-escalate tensions and avoid the necessity of using the flash-bang.
- 9) Requires the Department of Justice (DOJ) to post on its internet website a compiled list linking each law enforcement agency's reports posted pursuant to the reporting requirement.
- 10) Prohibits any peace officer of a local, state, or federal law enforcement agency, or a person acting on behalf of such an agency, from using explosive breaching charges for the purpose of immigration enforcement unless done as part of a joint law enforcement task force.
- 11) Defines "explosive breaching charge" as less lethal explosive charges that are deployed by hand to effectuate the forced opening of closed or locked points of entry often through the destruction of doors, locks, hinges, windows, and frame materials. Specifies that these charges include, but are not limited to, detonating cords, sheet explosives, shaped charges, blasting caps, and detonators.
- 12) Defines peace officer, for the purposes of the prohibition of use for immigration enforcement, as an officer of a local, state, or federal law enforcement agency, or a person acting on behalf of a local, state, or federal law enforcement agency.
- 13) Includes a severability clause.

COMMENTS

According to the Author

"Californians across the state have a constitutionally protected right to protest. This right has been consistently under threat in recent years, as the equipment law enforcement uses for crowd control has become increasingly militarized and dangerous. Flash-bang grenades, which emit blinding flashes of light, create overpressure, and produce extremely loud bangs, have grown in popularity as a tool of crowd control and immigration enforcement actions. Though supposedly non-lethal, flash-bangs can cause temporary blindness, deafness, and fire shrapnel or pellets that can seriously injure both users and the public, especially without proper training. A lack of regulation, transparency, and training also extends to explosive breaching devices, often used by law enforcement to blow open doors and windows, and posing similar safety risks."

"The Legislature has already taken steps to curtail other dangerous crowd control devices, such as tear gas, rubber bullets, and beanbag rounds. SB 937 extends these existing restrictions and training requirements to flash-bang grenades, and it bars use of explosive breaching devices for immigration enforcement. This measure is vital to ensuring the safety of both citizens exercising their right to protest and law enforcement agents in the field."

Arguments in Support

According to the *Ella Baker Center for Human Rights*, "In June 2025, protests against the current federal administration were organized across the country, drawing over 5,000 attendees in Los Angeles alone. Though these protests started peacefully, excessive misuse of crowd control equipment contributed to injuries of both attendees and law enforcement. Flash-bang grenades, also known as stun grenades, have recently grown in popularity as crowd control devices during large-scale protests. Flash-bangs emit a loud bang and a blinding flash of light when deployed and can also throw shrapnel or rubber balls. Though classified as 'less lethal', these grenades pose safety risks to both the user and protestors. Eardrum rupture, lung injuries, fractures, and hemorrhaging are just a few of the reported injuries caused by flash-bangs.

"Last June, a man attending a protest in Los Angeles was hit by flash-bang shrapnel while observing, resulting in the loss of a finger. Premature deployment of flash-bangs can also seriously injure users— in 2024, an officer in New York suffered extensive injuries to his hand after a flash-bang detonated while he was holding it.

"Explosive breaching charges, or high-velocity explosive devices, are used by law enforcement to rapidly break open a door or window, usually during a raid. Use of these devices can cause serious injuries for all involved parties, ranging from hearing loss and burns to long-term traumatic brain injuries. In June 2025, federal immigration agents in Huntington Park endangered a mother and her two children when they used an explosive breaching charge to blow the windows off a home while they were inside. The suspect in question was not present and posed no imminent threat to the officers.

"California currently restricts the use of some military weaponry that is commonly used for crowd control, including tear gas and kinetic energy projectiles (KEPs) like rubber bullets and beanbag rounds, and requires proper training for their use, but has no training requirement or restrictions on the circumstances under which flash-bangs or explosive breaching devices can be used by law enforcement. Lack of proper training and reporting on the use of these devices undermines the safety of police officers and public trust of law enforcement.

"SB 937 adds flash-bang grenades to the existing restrictions on other less-lethal crowd control devices and prohibits their use, alongside explosive breaching devices, for the purposes of immigration enforcement. The bill also requires any user of a flash-bang to receive training from the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training before use. This measure is vital to maintaining both the safety of citizens exercising their right to protest and that of police officers in the field."

Arguments in Opposition

According to the *California Peace Officers' Association*, "SB 937 establishes a categorical ban on the use of flashbang devices in areas where children may be present, regardless of the nature or severity of the threat. This blanket prohibition fails to account for the realities faced by law enforcement officers responding to violent, rapidly evolving situations.

"Flashbang devices are a carefully controlled tool designed to disorient and distract, often allowing officers to de-escalate situations and take individuals into custody without resorting to lethal force. By removing this option entirely—even in life-threatening circumstances—SB 937 may inadvertently increase the likelihood of more severe uses of force, placing both officers and the public at greater risk.

"SB 937 also includes provisions related to immigration enforcement, despite the existence of a well-established statutory framework governing these issues. Senate Bill 54 (De Leon) Chapter 495, Statutes of 2017, already provides clear and comprehensive guidance regarding local law enforcement's role in immigration matters.

"The additional restrictions proposed in SB 937 are duplicative and risk creating confusion, inconsistency, and potential conflict with existing law. Rather than enhancing protections, these provisions may complicate compliance and divert attention from established policies that agencies have successfully implemented statewide.

"Perhaps most concerning, SB 937 imposes sweeping, categorical restrictions without allowing for the exercise of professional judgment based on the totality of the circumstances. Law enforcement officers are routinely required to make split-second decisions in high-risk environments where lives are at stake.

"Policies governing use of force must be grounded in objective reasonableness and allow for necessary discretion. By substituting inflexible prohibitions for this well-established standard, SB 937 undermines officers' ability to respond appropriately to dynamic and dangerous situations, potentially leading to worse outcomes for all involved.

"The California Peace Officers' Association strongly supports policies that enhance safety, accountability, and public trust. However, SB 937, as drafted, removes critical tools, duplicates existing law, and restricts the reasonable discretion officers need to protect lives."

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

- 1) Minor and absorbable costs to the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) to update its crowd control guidelines (Peace Officers' Training Fund). POST reports the bill would not require new training, as the tools and tactics at issue are deployed by SWAT officers who already undergo extensive certification, and the relevant material is covered at a basic level in the academy.
- 2) Costs of an unknown amount, likely in excess of \$150,000 statewide to state and local law enforcement agencies to publish the incident summaries this bill requires (General Fund, special funds, local funds). Notably, while the reporting obligation is incremental, the obligation attaches to more than 500 local law enforcement entities, and the aggregate cost may be reimbursable, pursuant to a determination of the Commission on State Mandate.
- 3) Minor and absorbable costs to DOJ to add flash-bang grenade reports to the compiled list DOJ already maintains for existing crowd control munitions (General Fund).

VOTES

SENATE FLOOR: 29-9-2

YES: Allen, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Cortese, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Hurtado, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar,

Pérez, Reyes, Richardson, Rubio, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Umberg, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

NO: Alvarado-Gil, Choi, Grove, Jones, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Seyarto, Strickland, Valladares

ABS, ABST OR NV: Dahle, Padilla

ASM PUBLIC SAFETY: 7-2-0

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

NO: Alanis, Lackey

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 11-4-0

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

NO: Hoover, Dixon, Ta, Tangipa

UPDATED

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