



New state laws coming into effect in 2025

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Gov. Gavin Newsom signed roughly 1,000 bills into law in 2024, and while many of them deal with technical matters, some of them will make big changes starting Wednesday.

Some changes to state laws, like those included on Proposition 36 — increasing penalties for certain crimes — are already in effect. But changes to consumer protections, cannabis regulations and worker protections are among some of the laws coming into effect in the new year.

TRANSPARENCY IN THE TROUBLED TEEN INDUSTRY

One of the new laws coming into effect in the new year is a bill by state Sen. Shannon Grove, R-Bakersfield, requiring greater transparency for the “troubled teen” industry.

Her Senate Bill 1043, or the Accountability in Children’s Treatment Act, requires licensed residential youth centers to disclose disciplinary methods such as restraints and seclusion on teens admittedly dealing with drug abuse or mental health issues. Disclosures are to be displayed on a public dashboard to be online by January 2026.

The bill was championed by hotel heiress Paris Hilton, who has become an advocate for reforms in the troubled teen industry.

The bill received no opposition statements.

BEER FOR BC

Bakersfield College's Memorial Stadium will now be allowed to sell beer thanks to a new state law that applies only to the city of Bakersfield.

Assembly Bill 2094, by Republican

Assemblyman Heath Flora, R-Ripon, provides an exception to the state law that generally prohibits alcohol from being sold on school property.

Several exemptions to the law already exist but Kern County doesn't meet the population threshold for the most common one.

In a statement of support for the bill, the Kern Community College District said there is high demand for events at Memorial Stadium, but current regulations do not meet vendors' needs.

“(The bill) would incentivize vendors to host events at Memorial Stadium, which would provide an essential revenue stream for our district,” KCCD said.

Opposed to the bill were the advocacy groups Alcohol Justice and California Alcohol Policy Alliance, which wrote the bill continues a troubling pattern of selling alcohol ads aimed at students.

REMOVING HARMFUL CHEMICALS FROM CONSUMER PRODUCTS

Several bills, including Assembly Bills 2762, 2771 and 1817, have to do with banning so-called “forever chemicals” from cosmetics, clothing and personal care products. Those bills prohibit the use of certain chemicals — including per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, also known as PFAS — in products sold in California.

A 2015 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated PFAS contamination is in the blood of 97% of Americans through exposure to various household products containing the chemicals. Multiple health effects associated with PFAS exposure have been identified, according to the National Institute of Health.

The bills were opposed by several industry groups that said the definitions of PFAS chemicals were too broad and the Jan. 1 effective date risked disruption to the industry's efforts at implementation.

BANNING CERTAIN PESTICIDES TO PROTECT BEES

Assembly Bill 363 bans the use of pesticides containing chemicals known as neonicotinoids, or “neonics,” from certain nonagricultural uses such as home gardens and golf courses.

Neonics have been criticized for their impact on bee populations, and their use has been curtailed in recent years.

The bill was opposed by the California Agricultural Commissioners and Sealers Association, which argued regulations already exist for the use of neonics and the protection of pollinators.

QUITTING ONLINE SUBSCRIPTIONS

Assembly Bill 2863 aims to make it easier for consumers to quit online subscriptions by requiring that “a consumer be able to cancel an automatically renewed subscription in the same manner that the consumer used to subscribe to the continuous service in the first place.”

The Craft Wine Association submitted an “opposed unless amended” statement requesting that wine clubs and equivalent alcohol beverages producers be excluded, citing costs of implementation, particularly for small producers. The exemption was not included in the final version of the bill.

BANNING PLASTIC PRODUCE BAGS

Starting Wednesday, grocery stores will no longer be able to provide shoppers with a plastic bag for produce items unless the bag meets certain compostability standards. Recycled paper bags may be provided as well.

Writing in opposition, the California Grocers Association requested a two-year phase-out period, “to allow stores currently using these bags to deplete existing inventory and, more importantly, to allow manufacturers time to transition to making compostable bags.”

PROHIBITING VOTER ID REQUIREMENTS

Senate Bill 1174 prohibits local governments from enacting or enforcing a requirement that a person present identification when voting or submitting a ballot at a polling location.

Voter ID laws have become a contentious issue, with some arguing the requirements limit access to voting for certain populations and others saying the lack of protections undermines election security.

An opposition statement to the bill was submitted by the Greater Bakersfield Republican Assembly.

“If an election is to be free and fair, voters must have the highest confidence in the entire election system, from voter registration to ballot counting and tabulation,” the statement said. “This proposed legislation would diminish confidence and impose the will of the state on local communities’ and municipalities’ elections processes.”

Election security advocates regularly give public comment at Kern County Board of Supervisors’ meeting asking for greater election security measures, while the county Division of Elections has defended the integrity of local elections.

The division recently announced the discovery of two errors in the November election, one of which will likely require a special election to remedy. Both errors resulted from a mistake by the division in distributing incorrect ballots to voters in certain districts.

EXTENDING RESPONSE TIMES FOR EVICTION NOTICES

Senate Bill 1174 doubles the time tenants have to respond to an eviction notice to 10 days and allows judges to grant extensions for tenants in eviction hearings.

An opposition statement from the Apartment Association of Orange County and the East Bay Rental Housing Association argued the bill does not address the underlying issue with evictions, which is the length of time eviction cases, known as unlawful detainers, are litigated.

PROTECTIONS FOR LGBTQ STUDENTS

Assembly Bill 1995 requires the state Department of Education to develop resources and strategies to support LGBTQ students and their families. It also prevents district employees and contractors from disclosing information about a student's gender identity or orientation without the student's consent, even to the student's parents or guardians.

“Choosing when to come out and to whom is a deeply personal decision that every LGBTQ+ young individual has the right to make for themselves,” the bills author, Assembly member Chris Ward, D-San Diego, said in a statement. “LGBTQ+ youth and their families deserve to decide on their own terms when and how to have conversations about identity.”

Writing in opposition, the California Family Council said the bill erodes parent rights and responsibilities.

“This bill places educators in a difficult position, forcing them to withhold significant information from parents, damaging the trust and open communication essential for a supportive educational environment,” the council said.

WORKERS MAY NOT BE ORDERED TO ANTI-UNION MEETINGS

Senate Bill 399 bans mandatory workplace meetings where an employer discusses its opinion about religious or political matters, including the decision of whether to join a union.

Proponents of the bill, including several unions and worker groups, said that so-called “captive audience” meetings were often used to intimidate workers or spread an employer's political or religious views.

A large coalition of employer and business groups opposed the legislation, saying it violates First Amendment rights.

“It is clear that the motive behind (the bill's) prohibition on employers discussing their opinions about unionization or pending bills is the assumption that employers will talk to their employees about the downsides of unionization and union-sponsored efforts, which the proponents of this bill disagree with,” the coalition said in a statement.

‘ENTERTAINMENT ZONES’ FOR PUBLIC CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOL

Senate Bill 969 allows local governments to establish “entertainment zones” in certain areas where alcoholic beverages can be consumed outside a licensed premise such as a bar or restaurant.

Local governments can already declare entertainment zones for special events such as fairs or festivals, but alcohol sales are limited to outside vendors, not brick and mortar establishments.

A handful of alcohol-related advocacy groups opposed the legislation, saying the bill would increase public drunkenness.

“Streets full of drunk partygoers do not benefit after-school care centers, or senior centers,” the California Alcohol Policy Alliance said. “To turn blocks and blocks into ersatz Bourbon Street assumes that alcohol is the sole economic motivator for a neighborhood, and actively drives out conflicting businesses.”

CANNABIS CAFES

Assembly Bill 1775 allows for Amsterdam-style cannabis cafes where cannabis consumption is allowed and cannabis retailers are allowed to sell non-cannabis food and drink items.

“AB 1775 legalizes cannabis cafes by allowing the sale of non-cannabis food and soft drink, allowing small cannabis retailers to diversify their business and move away from the limiting dispensary model,” the bill’s author, Assembly member Matt Haney, D-San Francisco, said in a statement.

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network; American Heart Association and the American Lung Association filed a joint statement of opposition to the bill, citing the negative effects of secondhand marijuana smoke.

“Secondhand marijuana smoke contains many of the same toxins and carcinogens found in directly inhaled marijuana smoke, in similar amounts if not more,” the statement said. “In addition, particulate levels from marijuana smoke are higher than tobacco smoke.”