



Bill Analysis

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Bill Number: AB 1291

SUBJECT

Bagley-Keene Act Public Comment Period

SUMMARY

This bill, under the Government Code (GC), would modify provisions of the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act (Bagley-Keene Act) to require a state body to allow at least twice the allotted time for public comment to a member of the public who utilizes translating technology; and makes other nonsubstantive technical changes.

This analysis only addresses the provisions that would impact the department's programs and operations.

REASON FOR THE BILL

The reason for this bill is to modify the Bagley-Keene Act to ensure that non-English speakers receive the same opportunity to directly address a state body.

ANALYSIS

With respect to all meetings of a state body, this bill would, under the GC, modify current requirements to provide that in situations when a state body limits the time for public comment, the state body must provide at least twice the allotted time to a member of the public who utilizes translating technology to ensure that non-English speakers receive the same opportunity to directly address the state body.

This bill would also make nonsubstantive technical changes.

Effective/Operative Date

This bill would be effective and operative January 1, 2022.

Federal/State Law

Federal Law

Various federal statutes establish open meeting requirements for federal agencies. Agencies may publish notices of upcoming meetings and hearings in the Federal Register. The Federal Advisory Committee Act, which became law in 1972, applies to government committees that advise the President and executive agencies on specific matters. Most federal agencies are subject to the open meeting provisions of the Government in the Sunshine Act, passed in 1976. This law requires "every portion of every meeting of an agency to be open to public observation." The exemptions to this requirement include matters of national defense, internal agency matters, and matters covered by privacy statutes.

State Law

The preamble of the Bagley-Keene Act provides that it is the public policy of this state that public agencies exist to aid in the conduct of the people's business and the proceedings of public agencies be conducted openly so that the public may remain informed. The Bagley-Keene Act implements a provision of the California Constitution that states that meetings of public bodies and the writings of public officials and agencies shall be open to public scrutiny, and explicitly mandates open meetings for California State bodies, including certain agencies, boards, and commissions. The act facilitates accountability and transparency of government activities and protects the rights of citizens to participate in State government deliberations.

Under the Bagley-Keene Act, set forth in GC sections 11120-11132, all state bodies have essentially three duties. First, to give timely and sufficient public notice of meetings to be held. Second, to provide an opportunity for public comment. Third, to conduct such meetings in open session, except where a closed session is specifically authorized.

The Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act requires every state agency, directly involved in the furnishing of information or the rendering of services to the public, where contact is made with a substantial number of non-English-speaking people, to employ a sufficient number of qualified bilingual persons in public contact positions to ensure provision of information and services to the public in the language of the non-English-speaking person.

Implementation Considerations

None noted.

Technical Considerations

None noted.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

AB 29 (Cooper & Rubio, 2021/2022) would, under the GC, modify the current noticing requirement under the Bagley-Keene Act to require that all writings or materials, connected with a matter subject to discussion or consideration at a noticed meeting, provided to a member of a state body by staff of a state agency, board, or commission, or another member of the state body, are to be made available on the state body's internet website, and be provided to any person that requests the writings or materials in writing, on the same day that the writings and materials are disseminated to members of the state body, or at least 72 hours in advance of the meeting, whichever is earlier. AB 29 was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee without further action.

AB 339 (Lee & Cristina Lee, 2021/2022) would, under the GC, modify the Bagley-Keene Act to require all open public meetings held by the Legislature, local agencies, and state bodies to include the opportunity for all persons to attend via a call-in option or an internet-based service option. This bill would also add requirements regarding noticing, translation services, and public comments options for public meetings. AB 339 has been referred to the Senate Committees on Governance and Finance.

AB 885 (Quirk, 2021/2022) would, the GC, modify provisions of the Bagley-Keene Act to require a state body that elects to conduct a meeting or proceeding by teleconference to make the portion that is required to be open to the public both audibly and visually observable. AB 885 has been referred to the Assembly Governmental Organization Committee.

AB 2958 (Quirk, Chapter 881, Statutes of 2018) modified the Bagley-Keene Act to authorize members of a state body that is an advisory board, advisory commission, advisory committee, advisory subcommittee, or similar multimember advisory body that has no rule-making authority to attend meetings remotely via teleconference, as specified, provided the meeting complies with all other applicable requirements of the Bagley-Keene Act.

SB 387 (Jackson, Chapter 537, Statutes of 2016), among other things, modified the definition of "state body" for purposes of the Bagley-Keene Act to include the State Bar of California.

AB 2028 (Aguilar-Curry & Gonzalez, 2019/2020) would have modified the noticing and availability of documents and writings requirements under the Bagley-Keene Act to eliminate the exception for agenda items that have previously been subject to public comment during a public meeting of a committee of the state body from the general rule that allows the public to comment on each agenda item of a state body. AB 2028 did not pass out of the Senate by the constitutional deadline.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

None noted.

FISCAL IMPACT

This bill would not significantly impact the department’s costs.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Revenue Estimate

This bill would not impact state income or franchise tax revenue.

LEGAL IMPACT

None noted.

APPOINTMENTS

None noted.

SUPPORT/OPPOSITION

Support

As per the Senate Floor analysis, dated June 23, 2021, the following organizations support this bill: California Federation of Teachers, California Immigrant Policy Center, and Disability Rights California.

Opposition

None on file.

VOTES

Location	Date	Yes Votes	No Votes
Senate Floor	June 24, 2021	39	0
Assembly Floor	April 29, 2021	77	0

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