



BILL ANALYSIS

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Bill Number: AB 2979

SUBJECT

California Victim Compensation Income Exclusion

SUMMARY

Under the Personal Income Tax Law (PITL), this bill would codify the existing exclusion of payments by the California Victim Compensation Board (CVCB) from gross income.

REASON FOR THE BILL

The reason for the bill is to exclude CVCB payments from gross income.

ANALYSIS

This bill would, under the PITL, exclude payments made by CVCB from gross income pursuant to Government Code (GC) sections 13955 and 13970. GC section 13955 governs eligibility for compensation from CVCB, and 13970 governs indemnification of citizens benefiting the public as relating to compensation from CVCB.

The bill states that the legislature finds and declares the following with respect to the exclusion of CVCB payments from gross income:

- The exclusion is necessary for preventing further hardship to victims of crime receiving payments from CVCB.
- The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) issued Revenue Ruling 74-74, 1974-1 C.B. 18, excluding New York's Crime Victims Compensation Board payments from gross income, as defined in the Internal Revenue Code (IRC) section 61, because the payments were disbursed from a general welfare fund in the interest of the general public.
- As California conforms to IRC section 61, it is the Legislature's intent to codify that CVCB payments are also excluded from gross income for state income tax purposes.

Effective/Operative Date

As a tax levy, this bill would be effective immediately upon enactment and operative for taxable years beginning on or after January 1, 2024.

*Federal/State Law**Federal Law*

IRC section 104 excludes from certain amounts received as compensation for injuries or sickness from gross income. This exclusion applies to the following amounts:

- Amounts received under workmen's compensation acts.
- Amounts of any damages received (whether by suit or agreement) on account of personal physical injuries or physical sickness.
- Amount received through accident or health insurance for personal injuries or sickness.
- Amount received as a pension, annuity, or similar allow for personal injuries or illness resulting from active service in the armed forces, or in the Coast and Geodetic Survey or Public Health Service, or as a disability annuity payment under Section 808 of the Foreign Service act of 1980.
- Amounts received by an individual as disability income from injuries caused by terroristic or military action.
- Amount received under federal or state laws for compensation surviving dependents of public safety officers.

Damages under the second exclusion are defined as "an amount received (other than workers' compensation) through prosecution of a legal suit or action, or through a settlement agreement entered into in lieu of prosecution." (Treas. Reg. 1.104-1(c)(1).)

Although not codified in federal law, the IRS has applied the "general welfare doctrine" under which gross income under IRC section 61 does not include certain payments made to or on behalf of individuals by governmental units under governmentally provided social benefit programs based on "need." To qualify for exclusion, the payments must:

- Be made pursuant to a governmental program.
- Be for the promotion of the general welfare generally on the basis of "need." Absent the establishment of need, the payments will not qualify for exclusion.
- Not represent compensation for services.

In Revenue Ruling 74-74, the IRS applied the general welfare doctrine to exclude from gross income under IRC section 61 payments made by the New York Crime Victims Compensation Board to victims who suffered personal physical injury as a direct result of a crime or to their surviving spouses or dependents.

State Law

California generally conforms, under the PITL, to IRC section 61 as to the definition of gross income and to the application of the general welfare doctrine. In general, if a payment is excluded from gross income under IRC section 61, it is excluded from gross income for California purposes as well, unless otherwise provided.

California also conforms, in part, to some of the federal statutory exclusions from income. For example, California conforms to IRC section 104, as of January 1, 2015. In addition, there are several examples of current California law specifically excluding victim payments from California gross income. These include the exclusion of restitution payments to victims and survivors of World War II, settlement payments to victims and survivors of the Armenian Genocide, and settlement payments for victims and survivors of the 2015 Butte Fire. (RTC §§ 17131.1, 17131.2, 17138.5.)

Implementation Considerations

None noted.

Technical Considerations

None noted.

Policy Considerations

None noted.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

SB 542 (Dahle & Dahle, 2023/2024) under the PITL and the Corporation Tax Law (CTL), would provide a qualified taxpayer an exclusion from gross income for amounts received from a settlement entity in connection with the 2021 Dixie Fire or the 2022 Mill Fire. SB 542 is currently in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

SB 927 (Dahle, et al., 2023/2024) under the PITL and the CTL, would provide a taxpayer an exclusion from gross income for qualified amounts received in settlement to replace property damaged or destroyed in a natural disaster declared a state of emergency by the Governor and the President of the United States. SB 927 did not pass by the constitutional deadline.

SB 1246 (Stern & Valladares, Chapter 841, Statutes of 2022) provided to qualified taxpayers an exclusion from gross income for amounts received from Southern California Edison in settlement for claims relating to the 2017 Thomas Fire or the 2018 Woolsey Fire and allow refunds of tax previously paid on those amounts.

AB 1249 (Gallagher, Chapter 749, Statutes of 2022) provided an exclusion from gross income for amounts received in settlement under the order of the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of California dated June 20, 2020, case number 19-30088, docket number 8053 and allowed refunds of tax previously paid on those amounts.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The CVCB administers programs that provide compensation to victims of violent crime for the losses they suffer as a direct result of criminal acts. The CVCB also makes payments to private citizen claimants who took a direct action that benefited the public by preventing a crime or rescuing a person in immediate danger. The CVCB awards payments to victims and derivative victims who suffer injuries or death as a direct result of certain crimes. To be eligible, victims must meet specific criteria and file a timely application with the CVCB. Victims can receive up to \$70,000 for medical bills, mental health treatment, and other expenses. CVCB only pays for expenses that are not reimbursed by other sources.

OTHER STATES' INFORMATION

None Noted.

FISCAL IMPACT

No impact.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Revenue Estimate

If it is determined that the California Victim Compensation Board payments would be exempt under federal law, given our conformity with the IRC section 61, those payments would also be exempt under state law. With the assumption that these payments are exempt under current state law, there would be no revenue impact.

LEGAL IMPACT

None noted.

EQUITY IMPACT

None noted.

APPOINTMENTS

None noted.

SUPPORT/OPPOSITION

Senate Revenue and Taxation Committee 06-25-2024

Support:

- AAPIs for Civic Empowerment
- Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California
- California District Attorneys Association City of Monterey Park
- Ella Baker Center for Human Right Prosecutors Alliance of California
- Project of Tides Advocacy

Opposition: None on file.

VOTES

Location	Date	Yes Votes	No Votes
Senate Floor	June 27, 2024	40	0
Assembly Floor	May 21, 2024	71	0

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