



Civil Rights Department

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New Year Brings New Laws That Build on Strong State Civil Rights Protections

State highlights new laws and resources to help people across California better protect themselves and their communities against discrimination

SACRAMENTO – As new laws go into effect, the California Civil Rights Department (CRD) today highlighted new laws and existing resources to help people across California better protect themselves and their communities against discrimination. Through educational materials, community outreach, and ongoing enforcement, CRD is committed to upholding state civil rights protections and combatting discrimination wherever it occurs.

“California continues to lead on civil rights progress,” **said CRD Director Kevin Kish**. “2026 is no exception. As the new year gets under way, our commitment to protecting all Californians is as strong as ever. I encourage every Californian to take advantage of the resources we offer to learn more about your rights. Together, we can help protect the people around us and fight back against discrimination.”

Meeting Californians Where They Are

A key part of CRD’s work to enforce state civil rights laws and tackle discrimination is ensuring Californians have accurate and timely information about their rights and responsibilities. CRD works to support this goal through a range of proactive outreach efforts, including [conducting both online and in-person trainings and presentations](#), [publishing and disseminating guides and factsheets](#), and working directly with community partners to identify and respond to civil rights challenges faced by Californians across the state. For instance, in 2025, the department took part in nearly 300 events across California. The department also recently [issued an updated factsheet](#) to incorporate new job leave protections for victims of violence to attend related legal proceedings. From state laws [prohibiting discrimination against renters who use Section 8](#) to [protections at businesses for people with service animals](#), the state has robust laws and regulations in place that help safeguard Californians from all walks of life.

New Civil Rights Laws and Protections for 2026

In 2026, a range of new civil rights laws enforced by or relating to the work of CRD are now in effect or, as specified, will go into effect in the near future:

- **Bias Training:** Under [Senate Bill 303](#), employers are encouraged to offer bias mitigation trainings. The law also provides that an employee’s admission or acknowledgement of their own personal bias when disclosed in good faith and solicited during such training generally does not on its own constitute unlawful discrimination.
- **Pay Data:** Under [Senate Bill 464](#), California will require large employers to use an expanded set of job categories as part of pay data reporting to capture more in-depth information about demographic and pay disparities. The law also clarifies that companies that fail to report pay data are subject to mandatory civil penalties.
- **Descendants of Enslaved People:** Under [Senate Bill 518](#), California will launch a first-in-the-nation Bureau for Descendants of American Slavery to eventually create a process to verify individuals as descendants of American slavery and is establishing a permanent state entity intended to advance reparative initiatives in the future.
- **Equal Pay Act:** Under [Senate Bill 642](#), protections under the California Equal Pay Act are now expanded to allow for three years to file a complaint and include a six-year lookback period to recover backpay and other remedies. The law also updates the analysis for pay discrimination complaints to make comparisons between a person of “another sex” rather than the “opposite sex.”
- **Better Demographic Data:** Under [Assembly Bill 91](#), many state and local government entities will begin to collect more granular data for Middle Eastern or North African communities.
- **Anti-Hate Commission:** Under [Assembly Bill 822](#), the work of the Commission on the State of Hate has been extended through the end of 2030. The Commission is part of California’s nation-leading efforts to prevent and respond to hate.

If you or someone you know has experienced discrimination, CRD may be able to assist you through its [complaint process](#). The department also [provides general information and factsheets online](#) about civil rights protections for members of the public.

If you’d like to request an accommodation or assistance in another language to attend CRD’s online trainings or request a speaker to come to your event, please email outreach@calcivilrights.ca.gov.

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The California Civil Rights Department (CRD) is the state agency charged with enforcing California’s civil rights laws. CRD’s mission is to protect the people of California from unlawful discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and state-funded programs and activities, and from hate violence and human trafficking. For more information, visit calcivilrights.ca.gov.

