

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
Senator Thomas Umberg, Chair
2025-2026 Regular Session

AB 1954 (Ward)
Version: June 4, 2026
Hearing Date: June 16, 2026
Fiscal: Yes
Urgency: No
AM

SUBJECT

Municipal golf courses: reservations

DIGEST

This bill enacts the Protecting Access to Reservations Act, which prohibits a person or operator of a third-party golf reservation service platform from listing, advertising, promoting, selling, or transferring reservations for a golf course owned by a local agency on a third-party reservation service platform without a written agreement with the golf course operator, except as specified.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This bill is intended to address the issue of golf tee time brokers selling tee times at municipal golf courses. The author and sponsor note that California has over 200 publicly owned and operated golf courses and when tee times are bought up by third-party websites and sold for more than the original price it creates an unfair system that disadvantages the public. This bill seeks to address this issue by banning this practice unless a third-party website has a written agreement with a municipal golf course to sell reservations on the third-party website.

The bill is sponsored by the California Alliance for Golf. The bill is supported by golf advocates and local government representatives, including the League of California Cities and California Special Districts Association. No timely opposition was received by the Committee. Should the bill pass this Committee it will be referred to the Senate Business, Professions and Economic Development Committee.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE LAW

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the UCL and defines “unfair competition” to mean and include any unlawful, unfair, or fraudulent business act or practice and unfair, deceptive, untrue, or misleading advertising and any act prohibited by Chapter 1 (commencing with Section 17500) of Part 3 of Division 7 of the Business and Professions Code. (Bus. & Prof. Code §§ 17200 et seq.)
- 2) Provides that any person who engages, has engaged, or proposes to engage in unfair competition may be enjoined in any court of competent jurisdiction. Any person may pursue representative claims or relief on behalf of others only if the claimant meets the standing requirements of Business and Professions Code Section 17204 and complies with Section 382 of the Code of Civil Procedure, but these limitations do not apply to claims brought under this chapter by the Attorney General, or any district attorney, county counsel, city attorney, or city prosecutor in this state. (Bus. & Prof. Code § 17203.)
- 3) Holds any person who engages, has engaged, or proposes to engage in unfair competition liable for a civil penalty not to exceed \$2,500 for each violation, which shall be assessed and recovered in a civil action brought in the name of the people of the State of California by the Attorney General, by any district attorney, by any county counsel authorized by agreement with the district attorney in actions involving violation of a county ordinance, by any city attorney of a city having a population in excess of 750,000, or by a county counsel of any county within which a city has a population in excess of 750,000, by any city attorney of any city and county, or, with the consent of the district attorney, by a city prosecutor in any city having a full-time city prosecutor, in any court of competent jurisdiction. (Bus. & Prof. Code § 17206(a).)
- 4) Requires that the penalties collected pursuant to the UCL to be used for enforcement of consumer protection laws and provides for the distribution of those funds based on the entity bringing the action, as specified. (Bus. & Prof. Code § 17206(c).)
- 5) Prohibits a person from using, without the consent of the registrant, any reproduction, counterfeit, copy, or colorable imitation of a mark registered under the Model State Trademark Law in connection with the sale, distribution, offering for sale, or advertising of goods or services if such use is likely to cause confusion or mistake, or to deceive as to the source of origin of the goods or services. (Bus. & Prof. Code § 14245(a)(1).)

This bill:

- 1) Enacts the Protecting Access to Reservations Act (Act).
- 2) Prohibits a person or operator of a third-party golf reservation service platform from listing, advertising, promoting, selling, or transferring reservations for a golf course owned by a local agency on a third-party reservation service platform without a written agreement with the golf course operator, except as specified.
 - a) If a golf course operator does not post their cancellation policy on the internet website where the reservation is secured, an individual who paid for a golf course reservation may sell or transfer the golf course reservation for no more than the total amount that the individual paid to acquire the reservation.
 - b) The authority provided in a written agreement does not extend to an affiliate website or other internet platform unless the written agreement explicitly provides that authority to that affiliate website or internet platform.
- 3) Provides that any violation of the Act constitutes an unlawful business act or practice within the meaning of the UCL.
- 4) Defines the following terms for purposes of the Act.
 - a) "Affiliate" means any entity that, directly or indirectly, through one or more intermediaries, controls, is controlled by, or is under common control with, another entity.
 - b) "Golf course" means a golf course and its accessory facilities and services that are owned by a local agency. "Golf course" includes clubhouses, driving ranges, golf cart storage, locker and shower facilities, and sales facilities.
 - c) "Golf course operator" means either of the following:
 - i. a local agency operating a golf course; or
 - ii. an entity operating a golf course through a contractual relationship with the local agency, including a license, lease, or management agreement.
 - d) "Local agency" means a county, city and county, city, or charter city. "Local agency" includes a special district and joint powers authority.
 - e) "Third-party golf reservation service platform" means a website, mobile application, or other internet platform that is owned or operated by an entity other than a golf course operator and that offers or arranges reservations for on-premises service for a customer at a golf course.
- 5) Makes the following Legislative findings and declarations.
 - a) The State of California is home to many golf courses that attract tourists from around the world. They also provide recreational, social, health, and charitable benefits to the residents of the communities in which they are located.

- b) There are over 200 courses in California that are municipally owned by a mix of state, city, county, city and county, and charter cities. Because these public courses are parts of publicly owned park systems, they operate per-pricing structures that make them maximally available to local residents, seniors, juniors, schools, school athletic teams, and local clubs and civic organizations. This pricing creates a demand for tee times that, in California's urban areas, are among the highest if not the highest in the nation.
- c) Tee time brokers have become a significant issue throughout the state. By booking tee times en masse and selling, reselling, and brokering them at inflated prices on a secondary market, they substantially reduce the already strained supply of recreational opportunities available to California residents and harm the ability of the state's municipal golf course owners to operate them per a maximally affordable business model providing maximal equitable public access.
- d) This Act addresses a matter of statewide concern rather than a municipal affair as that term is used in Section 5 of Article XI of the California Constitution. Therefore, Section 2 of this act applies to all cities, including charter cities.

COMMENTS

1. Stated need for the bill

The author writes:

Golf is an incredibly popular sport in California, and its courses attract tourist from all around the world. This legislation is necessary to prevent bad actors from taking advantage of reservations systems for personal gain, as well as taking opportunities from local residents whose taxpayer dollars go towards the upkeep and maintenance of those public and municipal facilities.

2. This bill seeks to ensure access to tee times at public golf courses

The author and sponsor note that California has over 200 publicly owned and operated golf courses and when tee times are bought up by third-party websites and sold for more than the original price it creates an unfair system that disadvantages the public. Public golf course fees are much lower than those at privately owned courses, which helps to ensure that they are available and affordable to local residents. Tee time brokers use automated bots to buy desirable tee times at public golf courses and then

resell them for a profit on their websites.¹ This same issue has been seen with concert tickets² and restaurant reservations.³ This bill seeks to address this issue by prohibiting a person or operator of a third-party golf reservation service platform from listing, advertising, promoting, selling, or transferring reservations for a golf course owned by a local agency on a third-party reservation service platform without a written agreement with the golf course operator, except as specified.

A coalition of supporters note that:

When the ubiquity of 3rd party brokering became a front page story in Los Angeles and other California urban areas in 2024, municipalities adopted various forms of reservation protocols that mitigated the problem but in the end were not capable of solving it – protocols that involved additional expense to their patrons.

The U.S. Attorney’s Office indicted two men for failing to report \$1.1 million in income, including money from operating a tee time broker website in 2025.⁴ A Press Release from the California Attorney General’s Office regarding the indictment states:

As part of their business, the brothers reserved thousands of tee times for resale at numerous golf courses nationwide, including at least 17 different public courses across Southern California. The brothers created a monopoly of Los Angeles and Orange County area golf course tee times by securing the most sought-after early morning slots, often within seconds of their release to the public. As a result, the brothers made it more difficult and more expensive for members of the public to reserve tee times at these courses without paying them an additional booking fee, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. [...] In total, between 2021 and 2023, the Kim brothers earned nearly \$700,000 from their tee time brokering business.⁵

The bill provides that any violation of the Act constitutes an unlawful business act or practice under the UCL. The UCL protects consumers against unlawful, unfair, or fraudulent business practices and advertising. The UCL provides remedies for “anything that can properly be called a business practice and that at the same time is forbidden by law.” (*Cel-Tech Communications, Inc. v. Los Angeles Cellular Telephone Co.* (1999) 20 Cal.4th 163, 180 [citations omitted].) The UCL provides for civil penalties to be assessed and recovered from violators in the name of the people of California by

¹ Matt Hamilton, L.A. Times, (Mar. 9, 2025), *L.A. touts success at blocking tee time brokers from city golf courses*, available at <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-03-19/success-blocking-tee-time-brokers-from-city-golf-courses>.

² See AB 1720 (Haney, 2026).

³ See AB 1640 (Stefani, 2026).

⁴ Cal. A.G., Press Release, (Sept. 12, 2025), *Identical Twins Who Moonlighted as Golf Tee-Time Brokers Charged with Failing to Report More Than \$1.1 Million in Income to IRS*, available at <https://www.justice.gov/usao-cdca/pr/identical-twins-who-moonlighted-golf-tee-time-brokers-charged-failing-report-more-11>.

⁵ *Ibid.*

various governmental agencies and specifically details how the proceeds from those actions are to be distributed and used.

3. Stakeholder statements

A coalition of supporters, including the sponsor of the bill, write in support stating:

There are over 220 golf courses in California that are municipally owned by cities, counties, charter cities, and the state. As part of publicly owned park systems, these courses operate per business models that eschew maximal revenue generation in favor of making them maximally available to local residents, seniors, juniors, school athletes, local clubs and civic organizations. Because California's urban areas are among the most golf-starved in the nation, this model creates a demand for tee times second to none. It has also created opportunities for 3rd party tee time brokers to capture and broker tee times at inflated prices and in the process substantially reduce the already strained supply of recreational opportunities available to California residents. [...]

AB 1954 maintains those features of 3rd party arrangements that benefit the consumers of public golf course offerings and the public agencies that provide them, while allowing those public agencies the continued ability to manage those offerings for the benefit of the communities that are in the final analysis the owners of those offerings by balancing the needs of cost recovery and long-term capital reinvestment with the public interest served by offering specialized access to local residents, juniors, seniors, students, school athletes, local clubs, civic organizations, and local charities, and in the cases of some of the state's largest urban parkland golf systems, revenues over and above cost recovery that is then dedicated to non-golf park/recreation programs that would otherwise require public funding.

SUPPORT

California Alliance for Golf (sponsor)
California Association of Recreation & Park Districts
California Golf Course Owners Association
California Special Districts Association
California State Association of Counties (CSAC)
City of San Clemente
City of Thousand Oaks
County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation
Golf Course Superintendents Association of America
Latina Golfers Association
League of California Cities
Northern California PGA
San Francisco Public Golf Alliance

Southern California Golf Association
Southern California PGA

OPPOSITION

None received

RELATED LEGISLATION

Pending Legislation:

AB 1640 (Stefani, 2026) prohibits the resale of restaurant reservations, as provided. AB 1640 is currently pending before this Committee.

AB 1720 (Haney, 2026) establishes a 10 percent cap on how much live entertainment ticket resellers may charge in the secondary ticket market, as provided. AB 1720 is currently pending in the Senate Business, Professions and Economic Development Committee.

Prior Legislation: None known.

PRIOR VOTES

Assembly Floor (Ayes 70, Noes 0)
Assembly Appropriations Committee (Ayes 15, Noes 0)
Assembly Privacy and Consumer Protection Committee (Ayes 15, Noes 0)
Assembly Arts, Entertainment, Sports, and Tourism Committee (Ayes 8, Noes 0)
