

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

AB 2599 (Bryan)
Version: April 16, 2026
Hearing Date: June 23, 2026
Fiscal: Yes
Urgency: No
AWM

SUBJECT

Slavery: corporate disclosures

DIGEST

This bill requires businesses operating in California and with gross annual receipts of over \$100 million to provide information and records relating to their past commercial activities related to slavery, as specified, and for that information to be made publicly available.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Nineteenth Century American economy is inextricably intertwined with the practice of chattel enslavement. Even here in California, an ostensibly “free” state, enslavement affected the state’s growth through enslaved persons brought into the state from states where slavery was legal, and through the economic activities of corporations relating to enslavement. Banks financed the acquisition of slave property; shipping companies and railroad companies transported enslaved persons; and insurance companies insured slaveholders against loss of human “property.” While historians have done admirable work to uncover the details of this era, there is still much that remains unknown about which companies benefitted from slavery-related commerce, and to what extent. The absence of records also hurts the descendants of enslaved persons, who are left without information about their family histories.

This bill requires every entity doing business in this state and with annual worldwide gross receipts of over \$100 million to complete an affidavit, under penalty of perjury, verifying that it has searched through all of its records, and its subsidiaries’ and related entities’ records, for records indicating that the entity engaged in the commerce of enslavement. The affidavit must provide specified information relating to those commercial activities and be accompanied by copies of records from 1849 and forward reflecting specified transactions and information. Each entity must submit its affidavit on or before January 1, 2027. A department to be named within the state government

will then compile the information and, by January 3, 2028, create a digital public platform with specified information available to the public in an understandable and accessible manner.

This bill is sponsored by the Alliance for Reparations, Reconciliation and Truth and is supported by Black Women Organized for Political Action, Congregations Organized for Prophetic Engagement, the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, Healing Justice Santa Barbara, the Inland Empire Black Worker Center, LA Voice, the League of Women Voters of California, and Starting Over Inc. This bill is opposed by the American Council of Life Insurers, the Association of California Life and Health Insurance Companies, the American Property and Casualty Insurance Association, the National Association of Mutual Life Companies, and the Personal Insurance Federation. If this Committee passes this bill, it will be referred to the Senate Public Safety Committee.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE LAW

Existing law:

- 1) Requires every retail seller and manufacturer doing business in the state and having annual worldwide gross receipts that exceed \$100 million to disclose, as set forth in 2), its efforts to eradicate slavery and human trafficking from its direct supply chain for tangible goods offered for sale; the disclosure must be posted on the retailer or manufacturer's website, as specified. (Civ. Code, § 1714.43.)
- 2) Requires the disclosure in 1), at a minimum, to disclose to what extent, if any, that the retail seller or manufacturer does each of the following:
 - a) Engages in verification of product supply chains to evaluate and address risks of human trafficking and slavery. The disclosure shall specify if the verification was not conducted by a third party.
 - b) Conducts audits of suppliers to evaluate supplier compliance with company standards for trafficking and supply chains. The disclosure shall specify if the verification was not an independent, unannounced audit.
 - c) Requires direct suppliers to certify that materials incorporated into the product comply with the laws regarding slavery and human trafficking of the country or countries in which they are doing business.
 - d) Maintains internal accountability standards and procedures for employees or contractors failing to meet company standards regarding slavery and trafficking.
 - e) Provides company employees and management, who have direct responsibility for supply chain management, training on human trafficking and slavery, particularly with respect to mitigating risks within the supply chains of products. (Civ. Code, § 1714.43.)

- 3) Requires a person that submits a bid or proposal to, or otherwise proposes to enter into or renew a contract with, a state agency with respect to any contract in the amount of \$100,000 or more to certify, under penalty of perjury, at the time the bid or proposal is submitted or the contract is renewed, all of the following:
 - a) That they are in compliance with the Unruh Civil Rights Act.
 - b) That they are in compliance with the California Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA).
 - c) That any policy they have against any sovereign peoples recognized by the government of the United States, including, but not limited to, the nation and people of Israel, is not used to discriminate in violation of the Unruh Civil Rights Act or the FEHA; any policy adopted by a person or actions taken thereunder that are reasonably necessary to comply with federal or state sanction laws or laws affecting sovereign nations or their nationals shall not be construed as unlawful discrimination in violation of the Unruh Civil Rights Act or the FEHA. (Cal. Pub. Contract Code, § 2010.)
- 4) Requires the Insurance Commissioner to request and obtain information from insurers licensed and doing business in California regarding any records of slaveholder insurance policies issued by any predecessor corporation during the slavery era. (Ins. Code, § 13810.)
- 5) Requires the Insurance Commissioner to obtain the names of any slaveholders or slaves described in the insurance records in 4) and make the information available to the public and the Legislature. (Ins. Code, § 13811.)
- 6) Requires each insurer licensed and doing business in California to research and report to the Insurance Commissioner with respect to any records within the insurer's possession or knowledge relating to insurance policies issued to slaveholders that provided coverage for damage to, or death of, their slaves. (Ins. Code, § 13812.)
- 7) Provides that descendants of slaves, whose ancestors were defined as private property, dehumanized, divided from their families, forced to perform labor without appropriate compensation or benefits, and whose ancestors' owners were compensated for damages by insurers, are entitled to full disclosure. (Ins. Code, § 13813.)

This bill:

- 1) Finds and declares all of the following:
 - a) Numerous American businesses across various industries, including, but not limited to, insurance, banking, tobacco, cotton, sugar, railroads, and shipping, reaped substantial profits by exploiting the uncompensated labor of enslaved persons. Consequently, these businesses and the individuals managing them

- directly profited from the labor of enslaved persons or directly benefited from insurance policies that insured enslaved persons. This intertwining of economic interests highlights the extent to which the exploitation of enslaved persons permeated the foundation of various American industries. However, very few American industries and the underlying businesses and individuals have adequately acknowledged their connection to the enslavement era.
- b) Many California residents and descendants of enslaved persons and their ancestors were defined as property, dehumanized, separated from their families, coerced into performing labor without appropriate compensation or benefits, assaulted and abused. Enslaved persons were treated as chattels in every sense of the word, including being used as collateral for insurance policies, loans, and other transactions, and in some instances, their ancestors' owners were compensated for damages by insurers.
 - c) Insurance policies from the enslavement era, which have been discovered in the archives of several insurance companies, document insurance coverage to slaveholders for damage to or the death of enslaved persons. In some cases, existing insurance firms or their predecessor firms issued these policies. These insurance policies, loan documents, and other documents and records provide evidence of ill-gotten profits from slavery. Slaveholders and those involved in the slave trade, in turn, profited from the uncompensated labor of enslaved persons, even if such profits have long been redistributed to shareholders. Industries that profited in this manner may include, but not be limited to, capitalized insurers, financial services providers, textile companies, tobacco companies, railroad companies, shipping containers, the sugar industry, and entities in other industries whose successors in interest remain in existence today.
 - d) The citizens of California, which include descendants of enslaved persons, are entitled to complete transparency regarding any involvement or profits acquired through slavery by companies seeking to conduct business in California. This disclosure is essential to ensure that the community is informed about the historical connections and practices of the companies operating within its jurisdiction fostering a culture of accountability and responsible business practices. This provision is a call to the companies who participated in slaveholding and the slave trade to acknowledge and address the enduring impacts of the enslavement era on our society, and to promote responsible corporate leadership.
 - e) It is essential for corporations to recognize their historical connections to the enslavement era and take responsibility for any past actions that have contributed to the perpetuation of unfairness and harm. By actively engaging in redress efforts, corporations demonstrate their commitment to fostering a more just and fair society. Remedying the harms resulting from the enslavement era is not only a moral imperative but also a crucial step towards ensuring a cohesive and inclusive community. This provision serves to facilitate corporate transparency and accountability, and to encourage the

- implementation of concrete measures aimed at alleviating the long-lasting adverse effects of the slave trade on descendants of enslaved persons.
- f) The full disclosure of the facts and acknowledgement of the depth and scope of the participation in slaveholding and the slave trade and public hearings with respect thereto furthers the public interest by recognizing the dignity of enslaved persons and descendants and promotes healing in the California community for enslaved persons, descendants, and those who participated in slaveholding or the slave trade.
- 2) Provides that the purpose of the section added to the Civil Code by this bill is to do all of the following:
- a) Promote the investigation of any participation in slaveholding or the slave trade by companies or contractors engaging in business in California.
 - b) Establish a system whereby full and accurate disclosure of company or contractor records related to participation in slaveholding or the slave trade are made publicly available, and which provides an opportunity for public notice.
 - c) Establish a governance structure to collect affidavits and enforce the provisions of the section.
- 3) Defines the following terms:
- a) "Department" means a department to be determined.
 - b) "Doing business in the state" has the same meaning as in Section 23101 of the Revenue and Taxation Code.
 - c) "Financial company" includes, but is not limited to, any bank in which the state deposits public funds and investment managers.
 - d) "In-state entities" means any business or enterprise that is doing business in the state, as defined in the Revenue and Taxation Code.
 - e) "Related entities " means both of the following:
 - i. The in-state entity's parent entities or subsidiaries that do business in the state.
 - ii. A predecessor in interest, regardless of whether that predecessor did business in the state.
- 4) Requires each in-state entity with annual worldwide gross receipts that exceed \$100 million to complete an affidavit, under penalty of perjury, verifying that it has searched through any and all records in its and its related entities possession, control, and knowledge for records that the in-state entity or its related entities bought or sold persons subjected to slavery, used persons subjected to slavery as collateral, provided loans to purchase persons subjected to slavery, insured transactions or the persons subjected to slavery, or provided related or other services to aid or otherwise facilitate those transactions.
- 5) Requires an affidavit in 4) to include all of the following:

- a) The names of each slave and slaveholder described in the records.
 - b) Evidence of transactions that benefited or otherwise profited from slavery in the United States.
 - c) To the extent applicable, records from 1849 onward indicating all of the following:
 - i. Insurance policies related to slaveholding.
 - ii. Evidence of purchase, sale, or lease of enslaved persons.
 - iii. The use of enslaved persons as collateral for insurance policies, loans, or other transactions.
 - iv. Evidence of the provision, or receipt, of loans to purchase enslaved persons.
 - v. Insuring transactions for enslaved persons.
 - vi. Any other company or contractor records evidencing participation in slaveholding or participation in the slave trade.
 - d) A statement from the in-state entity verifying that it has exercised due diligence to search through any and all records in its entities' possession.
- 6) Requires an affidavit in 4) to be submitted by one of the following dates:
- a) For in-state businesses doing business in the state as of January 1, 2027, by July 1, 2027.
 - b) For in-state entities commencing business in the state following January 1, 2027, within 60 days of commencement of business within the state.
- 7) Requires an in-state entity to submit an updated affidavit to the department upon the discovery of new reportable information.
- 8) Requires the department to do all of the following:
- a) Provide by January 3, 2028, a public digital platform.
 - b) Following creation of the database, make affidavits and reports received available on the platform within 30 days of receipt.
 - c) Update the platform with information required under 9) within 30 days that the new information and data are available.
 - d) Notwithstanding any other law, ensure that all affidavits, reports, information, and data remain indefinitely on the platform.
- 9) Requires the public digital platform in 8) to make all of the following available in an understandable and accessible manner:
- a) A database of all affidavits and reports received, with the ability to view individual affidavits and reports.
 - b) All reported information disaggregated based on a variety of data points, including, but not limited to, all of the following:
 - i. Company type.
 - ii. Multiyear review of data.
 - iii. Company value.

- iv. Estimated value or revenue gained in the time period of the slavery-related transactions or business.
- 10) Provides that the Attorney General may bring an action for injunctive relief for a violation of 1)-9).
- 11) Provides that nothing in 1)-10) shall limit remedies available for a violation of any other state or federal law.
- 12) Adds, to the list of certifications that must be made, under penalty of perjury, by a person that submits a bid or proposal, or otherwise proposes to enter or renew a contract with, a state agency with respect to any contract in the amount of \$100,000 or more, that, if they are an in-state entity with annual worldwide gross receipts of over \$100 million, they have submitted an affidavit in compliance with 2).

COMMENTS

1. Author's comment

According to the author:

AB 2599 focuses on transparency and accountability. If corporations benefited from slavery, the public deserves to know. This bill ensures we uncover those truths and make that information accessible to all Californians.

2. The enduring economic legacy of slavery in California

While California did not permit slavery in its original constitution and was admitted to the United States as a “free state,” slavery was, in fact, common.¹ California’s Legislature also protected slaveholders in other states by enacting the Fugitive Slave Act of 1852; the California Supreme Court upheld the Act, affirming that enslavers who brought enslaved persons from other states were not affected by the anti-slavery clause in the California Constitution.²

The United States Civil War ended 161 years ago. That feels eons away, but in economic terms, it’s not all that far back. In the past few years, the Legislature has considered a number of measures relating to the enduring economic legacy of slavery

¹ Smith, *Remaking Slavery in a Free State: Masters and Slaves in Gold Rush California*, 80 Pacific Historical Review 28, 29-30 (2011). The exact number of enslaved persons in California in the 1850s is unknown, but estimates range from several hundred to a few thousand. (*Id.*, p. 29, fn. 2.; see also Beckner, *Slavery: California's hidden sin*, Sacramento News & Review (Oct. 23, 2003), available at <https://www.newsreview.com/sacramento/slavery-californias-hidden-sin/content?oid=16199> (California newspapers in the 1850s advertising slave sales).) All links in this analysis are current as of June 18, 2026.

² *In re Perkins* (1852) 2 Cal. 424, 437-441, 454-457.

on the descendants of formerly enslaved persons; but much less attention has been paid to the persons and corporations who benefitted from chattel slavery. While many of California's businesses were founded long after the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, California also has many businesses which directly, or through the acquisition of older companies, profited from slavery or from business activities arising from slavery, such as writing insurance policies for slaveholders.

In 2000, the Legislature enacted SB 2199 (Hayden, Ch. 934, Stats. 2000), which required the Insurance Commissioner to request and obtain from insurers licensed in California records in their possession indicating that the company, or any predecessor entity, provided coverage to slaveholders for damage to enslaved persons.³ SB 1299 also required the Insurance Commissioner to make the names of all enslaved persons and slaveholders, and a report on the records received from insurers, publicly available.⁴ The list and report are currently available on the California Department of Insurance's website.⁵

3. This bill requires large businesses doing business in California to provide records and information relating to their slavery era transactions and economic activities

This bill imposes corporate disclosure requirements for commercial conduct relating to enslavement that is similar to, but more expansive than, SB 2199 (Hayden, Ch. 934, Stats. 2000). Specifically, this bill requires all entities doing business in California, across all industries, with over \$100 million in annual worldwide gross receipts to complete an affidavit, by January 1, 2027, that does all of the following:

- Verifies that the entity has searched through any and all records in its, or its related entities', possession, control, and knowledge for records that the entity or related entities bought or sold persons subjected to slavery, used persons subjected to slavery as collateral, provided loans to purchase persons subjected to slavery, insured such transactions or the persons subjected to slavery, or provided related or other services or otherwise facilitated those transactions.
- Includes the names of each slave and slaveholder described in the records.
- Includes evidence of transactions that benefitted or otherwise profited from slavery in the United States and, to the extent possible, records from 1849 forward indicating insurance policies related to slaveholding; evidence of purchase, sale, or lease of enslaved persons; the use of enslaved persons as collateral for insurance policies, loans, or other transactions; evidence of the provision, or receipt, of loans to purchase enslaved persons; insuring transactions for enslaved persons; and any other company or contractor records evidencing participation in slaveholding or participation in the slave trade.

³ Ins. Code, § 13810.

⁴ *Id.*, §§ 13811, 13812.

⁵ California Department of Insurance, Slavery Era Insurance Registry, <https://www.insurance.ca.gov/01-consumers/150-other-prog/10-seir/>.

- A statement from the in-state entity verifying that it has exercised due diligence to search through any and all records in its and its related entities' possession.

If a new entity begins doing business in the state after January 1, 2027, it must provide the affidavit, information, and documents described above within 60 days of the commencement of in-state business. If an in-state entity learns of new reportable information, it must provide an updated affidavit.

The bill requires the affidavits set forth above to be submitted to a state department that has yet to be determined. The department is tasked with compiling the information provided and, by January 3, 2028, reporting on the information to the Legislature and making the information publicly available on a digital platform that can be disaggregated based on a variety of data points. The digital platform must be updated to reflect new information received. The bill also requires companies to certify that they are in compliance with the disclosure requirements as a condition of bidding for a public contract over \$100,000.

As noted above, this bill imposes obligations similar to those obligations already imposed on California-licensed insurers through SB 2199. The author is continuing to work with insurance industry stakeholders to ensure that they are not subjected to duplicative obligations under this bill.

5. Arguments in support

According to Black Women Organizing for Political Action:

AB 2599 is a critical piece of legislation that builds on the work of the California Reparations Task Force which began the historical process of identifying harm at the state level. Since then, this research has expanded through local commissions who are also identifying the role local governments played in slavery, as well as subsequent racial violence and discrimination. This research at the government level, has been a significant first step in acknowledging the harm and exploitation of African Americans which has generated substantial wealth, and inflicted lasting economic and social harm. It is, however, missing acknowledgement and disclosure of the role and benefit to companies who owned and profited from the labor of slaves.

Corporations have a moral and ethical responsibility to conduct business practices in alignment with human rights. It is important that we acknowledge the financial benefit gained from businesses with historical ties to human trafficking and slavery. This legislation is building on current disclosure laws and transparency efforts like the California Transparency in Supply Chains Act (CTSCA) which already requires certain companies to disclose their efforts to eradicate slavery and human trafficking from their supply chains. Current disclosure laws are primarily focused on modern-

day slavery, but transparency regarding historical practices is also essential to informed public dialogue, responsible governance, and ethical business standards.

We believe that repair for descendants of U.S. chattel slavery and the larger African American community as a group, begins with naming and admitting the harm done. This is in accordance with the principle of Satisfaction as defined by the United Nations (UN) which requires acknowledgement, public disclosure and apology for the harm.

Harm cannot be repaired unless and until one acknowledges that it occurred. AB 2599 supports the ongoing historical effort in California to tell true history and acknowledge the historical and ongoing impacts of slavery.

6. Arguments in opposition

According to the bill's opponents:

We recognize and appreciate the Legislature's longstanding interest in ensuring transparency regarding any historical connections between insurance companies and the slave trade. In 2000, the Legislature addressed this issue through SB 2199 (Hayden), which was supported by organizations including the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the NAACP, and the Rainbow PUSH Coalition. That legislation required insurers doing business in California to investigate and report any records of slave-era insurance policies.

SB 2199 resulted in a comprehensive report to the Legislature and the public. The findings were compiled and published by the California Department of Insurance, and the report remains publicly available on the Department's website today. As a result of that statutory process, insurers have already complied with California law requiring disclosure of historical slave-era insurance policies.

As currently drafted, AB 2599 appears to require reporting that substantially overlaps with the work already completed pursuant to SB 2199 and codified in CA INS 13810.

SUPPORT

Alliance for Reparations, Reconciliation and Truth (co-sponsor)
Black Women Organized for Political Action
Congregations Organized for Prophetic Engagement
Ella Baker Center for Human Rights
Healing Justice Santa Barbara
Inland Empire Black Worker Center
LA Voice

League of Women Voters of California
Starting Over Inc.

OPPOSITION

American Council of Life Insurers
Association of California Life and Health Insurance Companies
American Property and Casualty Insurance Association
National Association of Mutual Life Companies
Personal Insurance Federation

RELATED LEGISLATION

Pending legislation: None known.

Prior legislation: None known.

PRIOR VOTES

Assembly Floor (Ayes 58, Noes 17)
Assembly Appropriations Committee (Ayes 11, Noes 2)
Assembly Judiciary Committee (Ayes 9, Noes 3)
