

New California Laws for 2025: What Employers Need to Know

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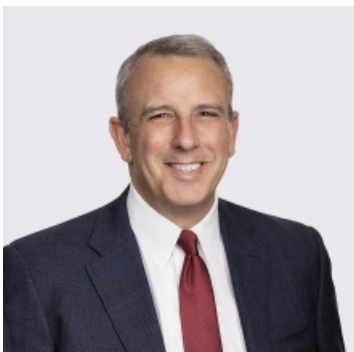
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California's 2024 legislative session wrapped up with Governor Gavin Newsom signing significant bills affecting employers' workplace policies and operations in the state. The new laws below take effect on Jan. 1, 2025. Employers should review and update their policies, employee handbooks, and training programs.

Anti-Discrimination Laws

Senate Bill (SB) 1137 clarifies that the California Fair Employment and Housing Act, Unruh Civil Rights Act, and the provisions of the Education Code barring discrimination in public education prohibit discrimination not just on the basis of individual protected traits, but also on the basis of the intersectionality (combination) of two or more protected traits.

Assembly Bill (AB) 1815 amends the definition of "race" in the anti-discrimination provisions of the California Government and Education Codes. Under the amendments, race is "inclusive of traits associated with race, including but not limited to hair texture and protective hairstyles." Protective hairstyles "include but are not limited to such hairstyles as braids, locs, and twists."

Jury, Court, Victim Time Off Provisions

AB 2499 amends the provisions for time off related to jury duty, court appearances, and victim-related activities. It:

- Expands protections for employees;
- Requires employers to provide clear notice of these rights; and
- Clarifies that employees may use vacation or paid sick leave when on such leave.

Employers may require employees to provide documentation for their time off.

The bill also reinforces anti-retaliation measures to protect employees exercising these rights.

Paid Family Leave

AB 2123 eliminates an employer's ability to require employees to use accrued vacation leave before accessing California's Paid Family Leave Program (PFL). In the new year, employers may no longer require employees to use up to two weeks of accrued vacation before they can collect PFL benefits.

Driver's License Requirements in Job Postings

SB 1100 introduces new restrictions on requiring a driver's license in job postings, unless it is a bona fide occupational qualification. Under the law, an employer may not include a statement that an applicant must have a driver's license, unless the employer reasonably expects driving to be one of the position's job functions and

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reasonably believes that using an alternative form of transportation would not be comparable in travel time or cost to the employer.

Social Compliance Audits

AB 3234 requires employers to make certain disclosures if they voluntarily audit their operations for the involvement of child labor. Such employers must post a link on their website to a report detailing the audit findings.

Mandatory Meetings During Union Organizing

SB 399 enacts the California Worker Freedom from Employer Intimidation Act to curtail employers' ability to require employees to attend employer-sponsored meetings that convey the employer's opinions on religious or political matters. California employers have been monitoring the bill's passage because of its potential impact on an employer's ability to lawfully communicate its position and educate employees regarding a labor organization.

Freelance Worker Protection Act

Finally, **SB 988** establishes the Freelance Worker Protection Act to impose minimum requirements on contracts between a hiring party and a freelance worker. Under the new law, "freelance worker" is defined as:

1. A person or organization composed of no more than one person, whether or not incorporated or employing a trade name
2. That is hired or retained as a bona fide independent contractor by the hiring party to provide "professional services" (as defined under the California Labor Code)
3. In exchange for an amount equal to or greater than \$250

Employers should ensure compliance with all workplace laws. Jackson Lewis attorneys are available to provide more information on the complexities of California employment law. Subscribe to our [California Workplace Law Blog](#) to keep updated on developments.

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