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Public Law Update - SB 1187: Narrowing SB 707's Brown Act Requirements for Eligible Legislative Bodies

Summary and Context

Senate Bill 707 ("SB 707") made several significant changes to the Brown Act that became effective this year. Among them, SB 707 added Government Code section 54953.4, which created new public meeting requirements for certain cities, counties, and special districts. Those requirements became operative on July 1, 2026.^[1]

Senate Bill 1187 ("SB 1187") now scales back some of those new requirements. Governor Newsom signed SB 1187 on September 18, 2026. Because SB 1187 is an urgency measure, it took effect immediately.^[2]

SB 1187 does not repeal section 54953.4. Instead, it removes the language access requirements and several related public access requirements added by SB 707. The remote public participation, service disruption, and public outreach requirements remain in place.

Which Legislative Bodies Are Eligible

The section 54953.4 requirements added by SB 707 do not apply to every local agency. Instead, SB 707 applied those requirements to a category of local governing bodies called "eligible legislative bodies." Only those bodies are subject to section 54953.4.

An "eligible legislative body" includes:

- a city council of a city with a population of at least 30,000;
- a county board of supervisors of a county, or city and county, with a population of at least 30,000;
- a city council of a city located in a county with a population of at least 600,000; and
- the board of directors of certain large special districts that meet the statute's geographic, employee, or revenue thresholds.^[3]

SB 1187 does not change which governing bodies qualify. It changes some of the requirements that SB 707 imposed on eligible legislative bodies. Section 54953.4 remains in effect through December 31,

2029.[4]

Requirements Removed by SB 1187

SB 1187 removes several SB 707 requirements that became operative on July 1, 2026.

Eligible legislative bodies no longer need to:

- translate meeting agendas into specified “applicable languages”;
- translate the dedicated public meetings webpage;
- provide a location where members of the public may post additional agenda translations;
- assist members of the public who want to translate a meeting or receive interpretation from another member of the public;
- maintain an electronic system for accepting and fulfilling requests for meeting agendas and documents; or
- maintain the dedicated public meetings webpage required by SB 707.[5]

SB 1187 also removes the definition of “applicable languages.” That definition used population and English proficiency thresholds to determine when translation was required.[6]

These changes do not prevent a local agency from continuing any of these services. The Brown Act allows all legislative bodies to provide greater public access than its minimum requirements.[7]

Requirements That Remain

SB 1187 does not repeal section 54953.4. Eligible legislative bodies must continue to provide remote public access to open meetings through a two-way telephone service or two-way audiovisual platform. An exception applies when adequate telephone or internet service is not operational at the meeting location.[8]

When remote access is available, the agency must also allow remote public comment and give remote speakers the same amount of time as in-person speakers. If the agency uses an audiovisual platform, it must provide a call-in option and activate automatic captioning if the platform includes that feature.[9]

The service disruption requirements that SB 707 added also remain in place. Eligible legislative bodies must maintain a disruption policy. If a disruption prevents remote public access during a meeting, the body generally must recess for at least one hour and make a good faith effort to restore service. If service is still unavailable when the body

reconvenes, the body must make the findings required by section 54953.4 before continuing the meeting.[10]

Eligible legislative bodies must also continue making reasonable efforts to invite groups that do not traditionally participate in public meetings. These groups may include media organizations serving non-English-speaking communities and civic, civil rights, neighborhood, and community organizations. The statute gives legislative bodies broad discretion in deciding what reasonable efforts to make.[11]

Who Is Affected?

Because SB 1187 scales back requirements added by SB 707, its practical effect depends on whether a governing body is subject to section 54953.4 and, if so, whether the agency had an “applicable language” under SB 707.

Other local agencies: Section 54953.4 does not apply to governing bodies other than the city councils, county boards of supervisors, and special district boards described above. They were not subject to the SB 707 requirements in section 54953.4, so SB 1187 does not change their obligations under that section. They remain subject to the Brown Act requirements that otherwise apply to them.[12]

Cities, counties, and special districts without an eligible legislative body: These agencies are also outside section 54953.4. Their governing bodies were not subject to the SB 707 requirements in section 54953.4, so SB 1187 does not change their obligations under that section.[13]

Eligible legislative bodies without an applicable language: SB 1187 still has a practical effect on these bodies. Under SB 707, an agency without an applicable language did not need to translate its agenda or public meetings webpage. Other requirements applied to all eligible legislative bodies regardless of whether the agency had an applicable language. SB 1187 removes the requirements to assist members of the public with interpretation, maintain an electronic system for agenda and document requests, and maintain a dedicated public meetings webpage. The remote participation, service disruption, and outreach requirements remain.[14]

Eligible legislative bodies with one or more applicable languages: SB 1187 has a broader practical effect on these bodies. In addition to removing the interpretation assistance, electronic request, and dedicated webpage requirements, it eliminates the requirements to translate agendas and the public meetings webpage into applicable languages. It also removes the related requirements for making translated agendas available and providing a location where members of the public could post additional agenda translations. The remote participation, service disruption, and outreach requirements

remain.^[15]

Practical Implications

Local agencies that are not subject to section 54953.4 do not need to change their procedures because of SB 1187.

Eligible legislative bodies should review the procedures they put in place to comply with SB 707. All eligible legislative bodies may discontinue the interpretation assistance, electronic agenda and document request system, and dedicated public meetings webpage required by SB 707. Eligible legislative bodies that had one or more applicable languages may also discontinue the agenda and webpage translations and related posting procedures that SB 1187 removed.

The remote participation requirements still apply to all eligible legislative bodies, regardless of whether they previously had an applicable language. Eligible legislative bodies must also maintain their service disruption procedures and continue making reasonable outreach efforts.

Agencies may choose to keep any services that SB 1187 no longer requires. The Brown Act allows legislative bodies to provide greater public access than the law requires.^[16]

Burke, Williams & Sorensen, LLP regularly advises clients on legal matters relating to public meetings and the Brown Act.

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^[1] Gov. Code, § 54953.4; Stats. 2025, ch. 327, § 5.

^[2] Stats. 2026, ch. 324, § 4.

^[3] Gov. Code, § 54953.4, subd. (c)(1).

^[4] Gov. Code, § 54953.4, subd. (e).

^[5] Former Gov. Code, § 54953.4, subds. (b)(2), (b)(3)(A)–(B), (c); Stats. 2026, ch. 324, § 1.

^[6] Former Gov. Code, § 54953.4, subd. (e)(1); Stats. 2026, ch. 324, § 1.

[7] Gov. Code, § 54953.7.

[8] Gov. Code, § 54953.4, subd. (b)(1)(A)(i)(I)(ia).

[9] Gov. Code, § 54953.4, subd. (b)(1)(A)(ii), (B).

[10] Gov. Code, § 54953.4, subd. (b)(1)(A)(i)(I)(ib)–(ic).

[11] Gov. Code, § 54953.4, subd. (b)(2).

[12] Gov. Code, § 54953.4, subd. (c)(1).

[13] *Ibid.*

[14] Gov. Code, § 54953.4, subds. (b)(1)–(2); former Gov. Code, § 54953.4, subds. (b)(2)–(3), (c); Stats. 2026, ch. 324, § 1.

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] Gov. Code, § 54953.7.