

Date of Hearing: April 15, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON ELECTIONS

Gail Pellerin, Chair

AB 2655 (Valencia) – As Introduced February 20, 2026

SUBJECT: Campaign funds: security expenses: security personnel.

SUMMARY: Requires any security personnel that is paid for with campaign funds to protect a candidate, elected officer, or the immediate family or staff of a candidate or elected officer to be licensed by the state. Specifically, **this bill** requires, if campaign funds are used to pay for security personnel to protect a candidate, elected officer, or the immediate family or staff of a candidate or elected officer, that the security personnel must hold the appropriate license issued by the Bureau of Security and Investigative Services (BSIS).

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Creates the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC), and makes it responsible for the impartial, effective administration and implementation of the Political Reform Act (PRA). (Government Code §§81000 et seq.)
- 2) Makes violations of the PRA subject to administrative, civil, and criminal penalties. (Government Code §§83116, 91000-91005.5)
- 3) Provides that all contributions deposited into a campaign committee account are deemed to be held in trust for expenses associated with the election of the candidate or for expenses associated with holding office. Provides that an expenditure to seek or hold office is within the lawful execution of this trust if it is reasonably related to a political, legislative, or governmental purpose. Requires an expenditure of campaign funds that confers a substantial personal benefit on any individual with authority to approve the expenditure of campaign funds to be directly related to a political, legislative, or governmental purpose. (Government Code §§89510 et seq.)
- 4) Authorizes campaign funds to be used to pay, or reimburse the state, for security expenses to protect a candidate, an elected officer, or the immediate family or staff of a candidate or elected officer, provided that the threat or potential threat to safety arises from the candidate's or elected officer's activities, duties, or status as a candidate or elected officer or from staff's position as staff of the candidate or elected officer. Permits a candidate or elected officer to expend campaign funds without any monetary cap until January 1, 2029. Limits, beginning January 1, 2029, expenditures of campaign funds for security expenses to \$10,000 per calendar year. (Government Code §89517.5(b))
- 5) Provides, for purposes of #4 above, the term "security expenses" includes all of the following:
 - a) The reasonable costs of installing and monitoring a home or office electronic security for a candidate, elected officer, or the immediate family or staff of a candidate or elected officer.

- b) The reasonable costs of providing personal security to a candidate, elected officer, or the immediate family or staff of a candidate or elected officer.
 - c) Any other tangible item related to security for a candidate, elected officer, or the immediate family or staff of a candidate or elected officer. (Government Code §89517.5(a)(1))
- 6) Provides that “security expenses” do not include:
- a) Payments to the candidate’s or elected officer’s spouse, child, parent, grandparent, grandchild, brother, sister, parent-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, nephew, niece, aunt, uncle, or first cousin or the spouse of any such person.
 - b) Payments for a firearm. (Government Code §89517.5(a)(2))

FISCAL EFFECT: None. This bill is keyed non-fiscal by the Legislative Counsel.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose of the Bill:** According to the author:

Assembly Bill 2655 would require that campaign funds only be used to pay for personal security services if the security personnel are properly licensed by the California Bureau of Security and Investigative Services (BSIS). By ensuring security personnel meet California’s existing training and licensing standards, personnel will be prepared to protect candidates, elected officials and their families from political violence.

- 2) **Authorized Use of Campaign Funds and Previous Legislation:** The PRA strictly regulates the use of campaign funds by candidates, elected officials, and others who control the expenditure of those funds and generally requires expenditures of campaign funds to be directly or reasonably related to a political, legislative, or governmental purpose.

Due to escalating rhetoric and instances of violence and threats posing significant risks to individuals at all levels of government, last session, AB 2041 (Bonta), Chapter 372, Statutes of 2024, an urgency measure, was signed into law. AB 2041 broadened the types of security expenses that can be paid for with campaign funds and authorizes campaign funds to be used for costs related to security expenses, as defined, to protect not only a candidate and an elected officer, but also the immediate family or staff of a candidate or elected officer, as specified. Additionally, AB 2041 increased the expenditure limit allowing a candidate or elected officer to use up to \$10,000 of campaign funds for security expenses, as specified. AB 2041 took effect September 2024.

In response to concerns that the limit on the amount of campaign funds that may be used for security expenses was inadequate in today's climate, AB 789 (Bonta), Chapter 621, Statutes of 2025, deleted the monetary cap and allows a candidate or elected official, until 2029, to use an unlimited amount of campaign funds for security expenses to protect a candidate,

elected officer, or the immediate family or staff of a candidate or elected officer, as specified. Additionally, AB 789 clarified that security expenses do not include payments to a candidate's or elected officer's spouse, child, or other specified family members.

This bill provides that campaign funds may be used to pay security personnel only if the security personnel hold the appropriate license issued by the BSIS. According to the author, this bill will ensure officials do not unknowingly rely on unqualified individuals and that campaign funds that are used for security expenses are used appropriately.

- 3) **Bureau of Security and Investigative Services License:** The mission of the BSIS is to protect and serve the public and consumers through effective regulatory oversight of the professions within the BSIS's jurisdiction. The BSIS licenses and regulates the Alarm, Locksmith, Private Investigator, Private Security Services, and Repossession Industries.

According to the BSIS website, security guards are employed by licensed Private Patrol Operators or private security employers to protect persons or property or prevent theft as defined in the existing law. To be eligible to apply for a security guard registration through the BSIS, a person must: 1) be at least 18 years old; 2) undergo a criminal history background check through the California Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and, 3) complete the Power to Arrest training. An individual must complete 32 hours of training in security officer skills within 6 months of registration.

- 4) **Recent Research:** Threats and harassment are becoming increasingly common at the national, state, and local levels of government. Data collected by the Bridging Divides Initiative (BDI), a nonpartisan research initiative out of Princeton University that tracks and mitigates political violence in the United States (US) and maintains a public dataset, indicates that threats and harassment against local public officials are on the rise, mirroring trends in national-level data on threats against federal judges and members of Congress. BDI's Threats and Harassment Dataset recorded over 600 incidents of threats and harassment against local officials in 2024 — a 14% increase from 2023 and a 74% increase from 2022.

Complementary data from the BDI-CivicPulse, a quarterly survey of local elected officials, confirms a steady rise in reported experiences of threats and harassment since 2022. Survey data collected by the Brennan Center also points to an increase in the frequency and seriousness of hostility toward state legislators in late 2023, underscoring the broader trend of escalating threats across government. At the national level, the US Capitol Police reported a spike in threats against members of Congress in 2024, reaching levels not seen since 2021.

Moreover, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), questions about personal security remain urgent for many legislators after the assassinations of Minnesota House Speaker Melissa Hortman and her husband, and the shootings of Minnesota Senator John Hoffman and his wife last year. Security might be readily available in government buildings and at state events, but every elected official starts out as a candidate, and the campaign trail can be a different story. NCSL points out that California, Louisiana and Minnesota allow candidates to use campaign funds for security for themselves and family members and laws in California and Louisiana also cover security services for campaign staff. Extending beyond physical security, Louisiana permits candidates to spend

campaign cash on cybersecurity services, and Minnesota's approved uses of campaign funds include identity theft monitoring services.

- 5) **Arguments in Support:** The sponsor of this bill, the Fair Political Practices Commission, writes:

There are currently no requirements or guidelines for a committee that wishes to use campaign funds to hire security personnel. Under existing law, a committee would be permitted to hire any person to provide security, even if that person had no background, training, or expertise in providing security services.

AB 2655 would provide important clarification by authorizing the use of campaign funds to pay security personnel only if the security personnel hold the appropriate license issued by the Bureau of Security and Investigative Services.

This bill will help ensure that any security personnel hired to protect a candidate, elected officer, or their staff or family have the appropriate training and experience to effectively respond to emergency situations.

- 6) **Political Reform Act of 1974:** California voters passed an initiative, Proposition 9, in 1974 that created the FPPC and codified significant restrictions and prohibitions on candidates, officeholders, and lobbyists. That initiative is commonly known as the PRA. Amendments to the PRA that are not submitted to the voters, such as those contained in this bill, must further the purposes of the initiative and require a two-thirds vote of both houses of the Legislature.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Fair Political Practices Commission (Sponsor)

Opposition

None on file.

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