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SB-820 Settlement agreements: confidentiality. (2017-2018)

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Senate Bill No. 820

CHAPTER 953

An act to add Section 1001 to the Code of Civil Procedure, relating to civil procedure.

[Approved by Governor September 30, 2018. Filed with Secretary of State September 30, 2018.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 820, Leyva. Settlement agreements: confidentiality.

Existing law prohibits a provision in a settlement agreement that prevents the disclosure of factual information related to the action in a civil action with a factual foundation establishing a cause of action for civil damages for certain enumerated sexual offenses. Existing law prohibits a court from entering an order in any of these types of civil actions that restricts disclosure of this information, as specified, and it makes a provision in a settlement agreement that prevents the disclosure of factual information related to the action, entered into on or after January 1, 2017, void as a matter of law and against public policy.

This bill would prohibit a provision in a settlement agreement that prevents the disclosure of factual information relating to certain claims of sexual assault, sexual harassment, or harassment or discrimination based on sex, that are filed in a civil or administrative action. The bill would make a provision in a settlement agreement that prevents the disclosure of factual information related to the claim, as described in the bill, entered into on or after January 1, 2019, void as a matter of law and against public policy. The bill would also provide that a court may consider the pleadings and other papers in the record, or any other findings of the court in determining the factual foundation of the causes of action specified in these provisions. The bill would create an exception, not applicable if a party is a government agency or public official, for a provision that shields the identity of the claimant and all facts that could lead to the discovery of his or her identity, if the provision is included within the settlement agreement at the request of the claimant.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: no Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Section 1001 is added to the Code of Civil Procedure, immediately preceding Section 1002, to read:

1001. (a) Notwithstanding any other law, a provision within a settlement agreement that prevents the disclosure of factual information related to a claim filed in a civil action or a complaint filed in an administrative action, regarding any of the following, is prohibited:

(1) An act of sexual assault that is not governed by subdivision (a) of Section 1002.

(2) An act of sexual harassment, as defined in Section 51.9 of the Civil Code.

(3) An act of workplace harassment or discrimination based on sex, or failure to prevent an act of workplace harassment or discrimination based on sex or an act of retaliation against a person for reporting harassment or discrimination based on sex, as described in subdivisions (h), (i), (j), and (k) of Section 12940 of the Government Code.

(4) An act of harassment or discrimination based on sex, or an act of retaliation against a person for reporting harassment or discrimination based on sex, by the owner of a housing accommodation, as described in Section 12955 of the Government Code.

(b) Notwithstanding any other law, in a civil matter described in paragraphs (1) to (4), inclusive, of subdivision (a), a court shall not enter, by stipulation or otherwise, an order that restricts the disclosure of information in a manner that conflicts with subdivision (a).

(c) Notwithstanding subdivision (a) and (b), a provision that shields the identity of the claimant and all facts that could lead to the discovery of his or her identity, including pleadings filed in court, may be included within a settlement agreement at the request of the claimant. This subdivision does not apply if a government agency or public official is a party to the settlement agreement.

(d) Except as authorized by subdivision (c), a provision within a settlement agreement that prevents the disclosure of factual information related to the claim described in subdivision (a) that is entered into on or after January 1, 2019, is void as a matter of law and against public policy.

(e) This section does not prohibit the entry or enforcement of a provision in any agreement that precludes the disclosure of the amount paid in settlement of a claim.

(f) In determining the factual foundation of a cause of action for civil damages under subdivision (a), a court may consider the pleadings and other papers in the record, or any other findings of the court.