



Home	Bill Information	California Law	Publications	Other Resources	My Subscriptions	My Favorites
------	------------------	----------------	--------------	-----------------	------------------	--------------

AB-1524 Courts: fees. (2025-2026)

SHARE THIS:  

Date Published: 10/06/2025 02:00 PM

Assembly Bill No. 1524

CHAPTER 306

An act to amend Sections 68150 and 70631 of the Government Code, relating to courts.

[Approved by Governor October 03, 2025. Filed with Secretary of State October 03, 2025.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1524, Committee on Judiciary. Courts: fees.

Existing law, the Uniform Civil Fees and Standard Fee Schedule Act of 2005, establishes a set fee schedule for courts to implement for, among other things, filings, service, and changes of venue.

Existing law authorizes the court to charge a reasonable fee that does not exceed the costs of providing the service or product, if the Judicial Council approves the fee, as specified.

The bill would instead prohibit the court from charging a fee that exceeds the cost to the court of providing the service or product. The bill would require any fee not explicitly authorized by statute or rule to be approved by the Judicial Council. The bill would also require the Judicial Council, by December 1, 2027, to report to the Legislature, as specified, regarding each fee charged by a superior court in the 2026–27 fiscal year for which the revenue collected by and distributed to the court as a result of the fee exceeds the court's cost of providing the service or product. The bill would also require the Judicial Council, by December 1, 2028, and December 1, 2029, to report certain data to the Legislature, as specified, regarding the 2027–28 and 2028–29 fiscal years, respectively.

Existing law authorizes trial court records to be created, maintained, and preserved in any form of communication or representation, including paper, optical, electronic, magnetic, micrographic, or photographic media or other technology. Existing law requires those court records be made reasonably accessible to the public for viewing and duplication, with a reasonable provision controlling for the costs of duplication, as specified.

This bill would require court records maintained in electronic form to be viewable at the court and be available for duplication at a cost, as specified. The bill would allow a member of the public to request to view or duplicate accessible records, on the premises of the court and with the requester's equipment in a manner that does not make physical contact with the record, without being charged any fees or costs to reproduce the record, unless reproduction would result in, among other things, damage to the record or unauthorized access to the court's computer systems or networks, as specified. The bill would authorize the court to impose reasonable limits on the use of the requester's equipment that are necessary to protect the safety of the records or prevent the copying of the records from being an unreasonable burden, as specified.

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

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

SECTION 1. Section 68150 of the Government Code is amended to read:

68150. (a) Trial court records may be created, maintained, and preserved in any form or forms of communication or representation, including paper, optical, electronic, magnetic, micrographic, or photographic media or other technology pursuant to the rules adopted by the Judicial Council pursuant to subdivision (c).

(b) (1) This section does not apply to court reporters' transcripts or to specifications for electronic recordings made as the official record of oral proceedings. These records shall be governed by the California Rules of Court.

(2) This section does not apply to original wills and codicils delivered to the clerk of the court under Section 8200 of the Probate Code. Original wills and codicils shall be retained as provided in Section 26810.

(c) The Judicial Council shall adopt rules to establish the standards or guidelines for the creation, maintenance, reproduction, or preservation of court records, including records that must be preserved permanently. The standards or guidelines shall reflect industry standards for each medium used, if those standards exist. The standards or guidelines shall ensure that court records are created and maintained in a manner that ensures accuracy and preserves the integrity of the records throughout their maintenance. They shall also ensure that the records are stored and preserved in a manner that will protect them against loss and ensure preservation for the required period of time. Standards and guidelines for the electronic creation, maintenance, and preservation of court records shall ensure that the public can access and reproduce records with at least the same amount of convenience as paper records previously provided.

(d) Additions, deletions, or changes shall not be made to the content of court records, except as authorized by statute or the California Rules of Court.

(e) Court records shall be indexed for convenient access.

(f) A copy of a court record created, maintained, preserved, or reproduced according to subdivisions (a) and (c) shall be deemed an original court record and may be certified as a true and correct copy of the original record. The clerk of the court may certify a copy of the record by electronic or other technological means, if the means adopted by the court reasonably ensures that the certified copy is a true and correct copy of the original record, or of a specified part of the original record.

(g) Any notice, order, judgment, decree, decision, ruling, opinion, memorandum, warrant, certificate of service, writ, subpoena, or other legal process or similar document issued by a trial court or by a judicial officer of a trial court may be signed, subscribed, or verified using a computer or other technology in accordance with procedures, standards, and guidelines established by the Judicial Council pursuant to this section. Notwithstanding any other law, all notices, orders, judgments, decrees, decisions, rulings, opinions, memoranda, warrants, certificates of service, writs, subpoenas, or other legal process or similar documents that are signed, subscribed, or verified by computer or other technological means pursuant to this subdivision shall have the same validity, and the same legal force and effect, as paper documents signed, subscribed, or verified by a trial court or a judicial officer of the court.

(h) A court record created, maintained, preserved, or reproduced in accordance with subdivisions (a) and (c) shall be stored in a manner and in a place that reasonably ensures its preservation against loss, theft, defacement, or destruction for the prescribed retention period under Section 68152.

(i) A court record that was created, maintained, preserved, or reproduced in accordance with subdivisions (a) and (c) may be disposed of in accordance with the procedure under Section 68153, unless it is either of the following:

(1) A comprehensive historical and sample superior court record preserved for research under the California Rules of Court.

(2) A court record that is required to be preserved permanently.

(j) Instructions for access to data stored on a medium other than paper shall be documented.

(k) Each court shall conduct a periodic review of the media in which the court records are stored to ensure that the storage medium is not obsolete and that current technology is capable of accessing and reproducing the records. The court shall reproduce records before the expiration of their estimated lifespan for the medium in which they are stored according to the standards or guidelines established by the Judicial Council.

(l) (1) Unless access is otherwise restricted by law, court records created, maintained, preserved, or reproduced under subdivisions (a) and (c) shall be made reasonably accessible to all members of the public for viewing and duplication as the paper records would have been accessible. Unless access is otherwise restricted by law, court records maintained in electronic form shall be viewable at the court, regardless of whether they are also accessible remotely. Reasonable provision shall be made

for duplicating the records at cost. Cost shall consist of all costs associated with duplicating the records as determined by the court.

(2) Unless access is otherwise restricted by law, court records maintained in electronic form shall be viewable at the court, regardless of whether they are also accessible remotely. Reasonable provision shall be made for duplicating the records at cost. Cost shall consist of all costs associated with duplicating the records as determined by the court.

(3) (A) A member of the public requesting to view and duplicate on the premises of the court a record that is accessible to the public shall be allowed to use the requester's equipment on those premises, without being charged any fees or costs, to photograph or otherwise copy or reproduce the record in a manner that does not require the equipment to make physical contact with the record, unless the means of copy or reproduction would result in any of the following:

(i) Damage to the record.

(ii) Unauthorized access to the court's computer systems or secured networks by using software, equipment, or any other technology capable of accessing, altering, or compromising the court's electronic records.

(iii) The use of equipment that would require the assistance of court staff to operate, or a wired electrical or wired internet connection, or that would obstruct the ability of other court users to access case files, terminals, or other court resources because of the size of the equipment.

(B) The court may impose reasonable limits on the use of the requester's equipment that are necessary to protect the safety of the records or to prevent the copying of records from being an unreasonable burden to the orderly function of the court and its employees. In addition, the court may impose any limit that is necessary to maintain the integrity of, or ensure the long-term preservation of, historic or high-value records.

(C) The court shall not subject a requester who seeks to use their own equipment to copy records in compliance with this paragraph to any more restrictions than the restrictions that apply to court users who seek to inspect court records. The court also shall not impose a time limit on a requester's ability to copy records with their own equipment that differs from the time limit that would apply to the inspection of court records.

(4) The intent of paragraph (3) is to facilitate the copying of records with a requester's own equipment and not to affect court rules that are intended to protect the safety or security of the court facility, court personnel, or court users. Paragraph (3) does not affect court rules that address either of the following:

(A) The use of cameras in areas or other equipment in court facilities for purposes other than to copy court records.

(B) Impose time limits on a requester's ability to access case files, terminals, or other court resources by which the public is able to access court records for the purpose of making copies of the records with their own equipment, so long as the time limits also apply to requesters seeking to inspect, but not copy, court records. A time limit on a requester's use of their own equipment to prevent the copying of records from being an unreasonable burden to the orderly function of the court and its employees is reasonable when the time required for a requester to make copies of records with their own equipment would be greater than the time required for them to obtain the copies by means of court-provided resources and allowing the requester to have additional time to make copies of records with their own equipment would interfere with the ability of other requesters to access court records.

SEC. 2. Section 70631 of the Government Code is amended to read:

70631. (a) In the absence of a statute or rule explicitly authorizing or prohibiting a fee by the superior court for a particular service or product, the court may charge a fee not to exceed the cost to the court of providing the service or product. A fee not explicitly authorized by statute or rule shall be approved by the Judicial Council. The fee shall be distributed to the court in which it was collected.

(b) By December 1, 2027, the Judicial Council shall submit a report to the Legislature, in compliance with Section 9795, regarding each fee charged by a superior court that in the 2026–27 fiscal year for which the revenue collected by and distributed to the court as a result of the fee exceeds the court's cost of providing the service or product, includes all of the following information:

(1) The particular service or product that is provided by payment of the fee.

(2) The amount of the fee.

(3) The cost to the court in the 2026–27 fiscal year for providing the particular service or product. If it is not feasible for the court to determine the exact cost, despite its good faith effort to do so, the court shall provide the cost basis on which the fee was calculated.

(4) The revenue collected by and distributed to the court in the 2026–27 fiscal year as a result of the fee.

(5) The number of persons who used the service or product in the 2026–27 fiscal year. If it is not feasible for the court to determine the exact number of persons who used the service or product, despite its good faith effort to do so, the court shall provide a good faith estimate of the number of persons who used the service or product in the 2026–27 fiscal year.

(c) By December 1, 2028, and December 1, 2029, the Judicial Council shall submit a report to the Legislature regarding fiscal years 2027–28 and 2028–29 that includes the information specified in subdivision (b). The report shall be submitted in compliance with Section 9795.