

Date of Hearing: April 16, 2026

Fiscal: Yes

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON PRIVACY AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

Rebecca Bauer-Kahan, Chair

AB 1954 (Ward) – As Amended March 17, 2026

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

SUBJECT: Municipal golf courses: reservations

SYNOPSIS

California hosts over 200 publicly owned and operated golf courses. With limited courses and millions of golfers, accessing tee times at the more popular courses can be exceedingly difficult. Compounding this difficulty are tee time brokers, unauthorized people often using technology to automate the process of scooping up tee time reservations en masse and reselling them at a higher value. These resellers can price out lower income and beginner golfers and impact a courses' bottom line with last-minute cancellations and unfilled reservations.

Specifically, this bill aims to address tee time resellers by prohibiting third-party golf course reservation platforms from listing, advertising, promoting, or selling golf course reservations without written agreement from the golf course operator. Violations of this law would be enforced under the state's Unfair Competition Law.

This is one of three Assembly bills being heard by this Committee related to protecting consumers from predatory resale practices. A.B. 1640 (Stefani) focuses on prohibiting the resale of restaurant reservations.¹ A.B. 1720 (Haney) establishes a ten percent cap on how much live entertainment ticket resellers can charge in the secondary ticket market.² All three bills seek to discourage resellers who are competing with actual customers by using technology to quickly gather up large numbers of reservations at golf courses and restaurants, or by buying tickets to live entertainment with the intention of reselling them back to the customers at an inflated price. Amendments addressed in Comment #5 expand the language to prohibit individuals from acting as tee time brokers, along with the platforms. However, the bill also protects a person's ability to transfer or sell their reservation for the price they paid for it in the event that they are not able to use the reservation and the golf course does not offer refunds for reservation cancellations.

This bill is sponsored by the California Alliance for Golf. It is supported by a range of golf advocates and local government representatives, including the League of California Cities and California Special Districts Association. This bill has no registered opposition.

This bill was previously heard by the Arts, Entertainment, Sports, and Tourism Committee, where it passed 8-0.

¹ AB 1640 (Stefani).

² AB 1720 (Haney).

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Pursuant to federal law, establishes the Lanham Act, which, among other things, prohibits the use in commerce, without the consent of the registrant, of any reproduction, counterfeit, copy, or colorable imitation of a registered mark in connection with the sale, offering for sale, distribution, or advertising of any goods or services if such use is likely to cause confusion, or to cause mistake, or to deceive. (15 U.S.C. § 1114(1)(a).)
- 2) Establishes the Unfair Competition Law, which provides a statutory cause of action for any unlawful, unfair, or fraudulent business act or practice and unfair, deceptive, untrue, or misleading advertising, including over the internet. (Bus. & Prof. Code § 17200 et seq.)
- 3) Prohibits a person from using, without the consent of the registrant, any reproduction, counterfeit, copy, or colorable imitation of a mark registered under the Model State Trademark Law in connection with the sale, distribution, offering for sale, or advertising of goods or services if such use is likely to cause confusion or mistake, or to deceive as to the source of origin of the goods or services. (Bus. & Prof. Code § 14245(a)(1).)
- 4) Prohibits a person from selling, or offering to sell, an appointment with the Department of Motor Vehicle. (Veh. Code § 1680(a).)

THIS BILL:

- 1) Makes findings and declarations regarding the detrimental impacts of tee time brokers on municipally owned golf courses and the residents that frequent them.
- 2) Defines the following terms:
 - a. “Affiliate” as any entity that, directly or indirectly, through one or more intermediaries, controls, is controlled by, or is under control with, another entity.
 - b. “Golf course” as a golf course and its accessory facilities and services that are owned by a local agency, including club houses, driving ranges, golf cart storage, locker and shower facilities, and sales facilities.
 - c. “Golf course operator” as either:
 - i. A local agency operating a golf course.
 - ii. An entity operating a golf course through a contractual relationship with the local agency, including a license, lease, or management agreement.
 - d. “Local agency” as a county, city and county, city, or charter city, including special district and joint powers authority.
 - e. “Third party golf reservation service platform” as a website, mobile application, or other internet website that is owned and operated by an entity other than a golf course operator and that offers or arranges reservations for on-premises service for a customer at a golf course.

- 3) Prohibits third-party golf reservation platforms from listing, advertising, promoting, or selling reservations for a golf course on the platform without a written agreement from the golf course operator.
- 4) Restricts the authority granted by written agreement to explicitly named third-party golf reservation platforms, not affiliate websites or internet platforms.
- 5) Grants enforcement authority under the Unfair Competition Law.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Author’s statement.** According to the author:

Golf is an incredibly popular sport in California, and its courses attract tourist from all around the world. This legislation is necessary to prevent bad actors from taking advantage of reservations systems for personal gain, as well as taking opportunities from local residents whose taxpayer dollars go towards the upkeep and maintenance of those public and municipal facilities.

- 2) **Background.** California currently hosts over 220 golf courses that are municipally owned by local government entities such as cities, counties, or towns. These courses are designed to be accessible to the public as they offer no-fee or lower rates than private courses that can cost golfers thousands of dollars a month in membership fees. California hosts some 2.8 million golfers, by far the highest number of golfers in the country by state, meaning that competition for available green is high and access is limited.³ However, the accessibility of municipal golf courses has recently been challenged by tee time brokers, unauthorized middlemen who scoop up free tee time reservations and sell them back to the public for a price.

Tee time brokers have become a rising and troubling trend in golfing for several years, as golfers have often complained about the difficulties in securing a tee off timeslot. In 2025, a federal grand jury charged two brothers, Youn “Steve” Kim and Hee Youn “Ted” Kim, with tax-evasion for income collected in part from selling tee times for local golf courses.⁴ Tee times are typically posted on the golf courses’ websites at 6 a.m. for the week ahead, and the brothers would purchase all of the tee times within seconds of posting. Using a Korean instant messaging app known as KakaoTalk, the brothers would connect with customers and sell the tee times for a fee — \$30 for non-peak hours and \$40 for peak hours. The brothers were able to reserve thousands of tee times for golf courses across the nation, including at least 17 different golf courses in Southern California, making it difficult for golfers to obtain a tee-time unless they were will to pay the fees charged by these brokers.⁵ Notably, reselling tee times on KakaoTalk is a fairly widespread practice, with several individuals admitting to doing it for church members or

³ SCGA, “Is There a Golf Course Shortage?” *Southern California Golf Association*, (Oct. 3, 2024), <https://socalroundup.scga.org/is-there-a-golf-course-shortage>.

⁴ Matt Hamilton, “Twin brothers charged with running tee time brokering scheme, hiding \$1.1 million in income,” *Los Angeles Times*, (Sept. 12, 2025), <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-09-12/twin-brothers-charged-with-running-tee-time-brokering-scheme-hiding-1-1-million-in-income>.

⁵ *Id.*

friends.⁶ The Kim brothers were indicted due to tax evasion for money collected from their reselling practices, as current law does not prohibit tee time brokering. This resale practice resulted in lost revenue for local governments with last-minute reservation cancellations and refunds if the tee-times were not purchased and cost local residents opportunities to enjoy recreational golf games.

3) **California's Unfair Competition Law (UCL).** California's UCL is a broad consumer protection statute that prohibits a range of business misconduct including "unlawful, unfair, or fraudulent" activities. The expansive language of the law allows courts to address business misconduct that is not explicitly illegal but is still considered deceptive or unfair to consumers, allowing for flexible enforcement in the absence of more specific statutes. UCL is used by both private plaintiffs and public prosecutors to file lawsuits covering a range of misleading business practices, such as false advertising and trademark infringement. In 2004, following concerns of frivolous lawsuits, California voters approved Proposition 64, which narrowed the category of individuals who could sue businesses under the UCL to persons who could prove injury and financial loss due to unfair competition.⁷

4) **The new scalpers.** This is one of three Assembly bills being heard by this Committee intending to protect consumers from predatory resale practices. This bill prohibits the resale of tee time reservations at municipal golf courses, unless a reseller has a contractual agreement with the course to resell the reservations. AB 1640 (Stefani) focuses on prohibiting the resale of restaurant reservations. AB 1720 (Haney) establishes a ten percent cap on how much live entertainment ticket resellers can charge in the secondary ticket market. All three bills seek to discourage resellers who are competing with actual customers by using technology to gather up large numbers of reservations at golf courses and restaurants, or by buying tickets to live entertainment with the intention of reselling them back to the customers at an inflated price.

This practice of purchasing a good or service en masse before the average consumer can purchase it with the express intent of reselling it to the consumer at an inflated price (long referred to as scalping in the entertainment industry), appears to be spreading from live entertainment tickets to other types of experiences and activities. Resellers are now selling reservations for restaurants, tee times, and even popular camping grounds back to consumers at a markup. While it is important that consumers either be able to obtain a refund, or transfer or sell a reservation or ticket that they are unable to use, this is not what is happening in these cases. Rather, brokers are intentionally amassing large numbers of reservations and tickets with the express purpose of reselling them for a profit. At some point, rather than addressing the problem one industry at a time, the Legislature may wish to consider making scalping, broadly defined, illegal across all live entertainment and recreational industries, from tickets to amusement parks and popular movies to reservations for picnic areas and pickleball courts.

5) **Amendments.** The author has agreed to the following amendments. The first amendment adds individual resellers who may be reselling tee times on other platforms, as current language only addressed third-party golf reservation platforms. The second amendment addresses an important consumer protection for this Committee: allowing someone who cannot use a ticket or

⁶ Matt Hamilton & A. Ahn, "Brokers are buying up precious tee times at L.A. city golf courses. Golfers are desperate and outraged," *Los Angeles Times*, (Mar. 16, 2024), <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2024-03-16/l-a-golfers-in-uproar-over-scarce-tee-times-at-city-courses-scalpers-selling-reservations>.

⁷ Bus. & Prof. Code § 17204.

reservation they have purchased to either obtain a refund, try to resell it to recoup the price they paid, or transfer it to someone else.

Amendment 1: 22949.93.2. (a) **(1) Except as provided in paragraph (2), a person, or an operator of a third-party golf reservation service platform shall not list, advertise, promote, sell, or transfer reservations for a golf course on a third-party reservation service platform without a written agreement with between the operator of the third party golf reservation service and the golf course operator. that authorizes that reservation platform.**

Amendment 2: (2) If the golf course operator does not offer refunds to individuals who purchase golf course reservations, an individual who paid for a golf course reservation may list, sell or transfer the golf course reservation for no more than the total amount that the individual paid to acquire the reservation.

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: California Alliance for Golf, sponsors of the bill, write in support:

AB 1954 would give the state's cities, counties, charter cities, and the state itself a tool in the form of a civil remedy that they would have to initiate of their own volition and at their own expense to restrain 3rd party brokering that is not performed by consent (written agreement) of the parties. This is a tool that they do not now have and one that only the state can provide.

[...]

We believe that AB 1954 provides the simple tool necessary for the public agencies that own roughly ¼ of California's golf stock to balance these equities at their own volition to preserve equitable access to the 220 plus golf courses that make up that ¼.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Alliance for Golf (Sponsor)
 California Golf Course Owners Association
 California Special Districts Association
 California State Association of Counties
 City of Los Angeles, Recreation and Parks
 Golf Course Superintendents Association of America
 Latina Golfers Association
 League of California Cities
 Mayor Todd Gloria, City of San Diego
 Northern California PGA
 San Francisco Public Golf Alliance
 Southern California Golf Association
 Southern California PGA

Opposition

None on file.

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