

# California lawmakers float stricter speech limits on campuses to address antisemitism

By Eric He

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In the wake of the Israel-Hamas war, members of the [state Legislature's Jewish Caucus](#) have been frustrated with what they view as an insufficient response to antisemitic incidents on California college campuses. Now, they're hoping they'll be able to force school leaders to implement limits on what is considered acceptable speech on campus.

[SB 1287](#) — sponsored by state Sen. [Steve Glazer](#) (D-Orinda) — would require public universities to explicitly prohibit calls for genocide and create mandatory programs for students to learn how to exchange ideas in a civil manner.

Antisemitism on campuses across the country has spiked in the months following the Oct. 7 Hamas attack and Israel's ongoing retaliation in Gaza. Jewish Caucus members specifically mentioned incidents at the University of California when presenting the bill at a news briefing.

“Even when we're dealing with divisive issues, all student voices have the right to be heard,” Glazer said. “None should be silenced. This bill is about the safety of students and the safeguarding of their free speech rights. This legislation will help restore an environment of civil discourse on our campuses.”

## WHAT'S IN THE BILL?

*This Pro Bill Analysis is based on the [text of the bill](#) as amended on Mar. 20.*

The bill states in its declarations that while free speech is critical to the education mission of colleges, the exchange of ideas should take place in a “constructive environment of mutual respect for diversity of backgrounds, ideas and viewpoints” (Sec. 1). While the measure does not specifically mention the fallout from the Israel-Hamas war, it claims that there have been “numerous instances” where students “have engaged in violence, harassment, intimidation and discrimination” that interfered with others’ First Amendment rights and called for or supported genocide, as [defined by the United Nations](#).

SB 1287 would add a new section to the [California Education Code](#) requiring the California State University and California Community Colleges school systems to amend their student codes of conduct to adopt and enforce policies barring violence, harassment, intimidation and discrimination that is meant to interfere with someone’s First Amendment rights or advocates for genocide.

The University of California school system, whose autonomy from the Legislature [is enshrined](#) in the state’s Constitution, would be “requested” to comply with the measure.

Universities would also have to (Sec. 2):

- Enforce “reasonable” restrictions on the time, place and manner for public protests and demonstrations, including an advance authorization
- Educate students on how to exchange views with mutual respect and civility through mandatory training programs
- Require students and applicants to acknowledge their obligation to comply with the measure as a condition of their admission and matriculation at the university

Beginning in 2025, trustees from the CSU and California Community Colleges would need to submit an annual report to the Legislature on how the measure is being implemented.

The bill would contain a severability clause (Sec. 2), and notes that school systems could be reimbursed under direction of the Commission on State Mandates (Sec. 3).

## WHO ARE THE POWER PLAYERS?

State Sen. [Steve Glazer](#) (D-Orinda) introduced the bill, which has 11 Democratic co-authors: state Senators [Josh Becker](#) (D-Menlo Park), [Dave Min](#) (D-Irvine), [Susan Rubio](#) (D-Baldwin Park), [Monique Limón](#) (D-Santa Barbara), [Lola Smallwood-Cuevas](#) (D-Los Angeles) and [Scott Wiener](#) (D-San Francisco) and Assemblymembers [Dawn Addis](#) (D-Morro Bay), [Rebecca Bauer-Kahan](#) (D-Orinda), [Marc Berman](#) (D-Menlo Park), [Laura Friedman](#) (D-Glendale) and [Jesse Gabriel](#) (D-Encino).

Assemblymember [Rick Chavez Zbur](#) (D-Los Angeles) also spoke at the [March news briefing](#) introducing the measure.

Gabriel, co-chair of the **California Legislative Caucus**, said he expects all three school systems — the **University of California, California State University** and **California Community Colleges** — to be receptive to the proposal, arguing enforcement wouldn't be necessary. At the news briefing, Gabriel described conversations with school leaders as “very frank about how we find the current situation on campuses to be unacceptable.”

“We have been very direct with them when we have seen examples where we thought that the response by campuses has been insufficient,” Gabriel said. “Unfortunately, we've had to communicate that message on a number of occasions.”

Wiener, the caucus' other co-chair, represents UC San Francisco, San Francisco State University and two community colleges in his district. He said that he's heard from students who “literally do not feel safe on campus,” adding that the bill is not targeting people who are protesting the war or the Israeli government.

“Everyone has every right in the world to do that,” Wiener said. “And there are diverse opinions within the Jewish community about the Israeli government about the war. That's not what this is about. This is about students in this situation.”

## WHAT'S HAPPENED SO FAR?

Lawmakers cited specific incidents at campuses when highlighting why the bill is necessary. In February, students at the University of California, Santa Barbara [posted signs targeting the student body president](#), who is Jewish, one saying, “You can run but you can't hide.” Meanwhile, at UC Berkeley, Jewish students [had to be evacuated from an event through a tunnel](#) as protesters broke open a door and shattered a window — requiring two students to seek medical care. The Jewish Caucus has [called out leadership](#) at college campuses for not doing more to address antisemitism after those incidents.

Members of the caucus also [sent a lengthy letter](#) to their colleagues on Jan. 3 — the same day that the Assembly's first floor session of the year was [halted by protestors](#) calling for a cease-fire. The demonstration, which was spearheaded by several Jewish organizations including Jewish Voice for Peace, If Not Now and the International Jewish anti-Zionist network, hinted at a rift between progressive activists and more mainstream Democrats.

Assemblymember [Isaac Bryan](#) (D-Los Angeles) called the demonstration “a powerful showing of civil disobedience,” while [Gabriel said](#) the protesters were interrupting the democratic process.

In Congress, the Republican-led House Committee on Education and the Workforce is investigating UC Berkeley over its response to antisemitic incidents, with committee chair Rep. [Virginia Foxx](#) (R-North Carolina) [writing a letter](#) to Chancellor Carol Christ on Mar. 19 demanding records and documents and alleging that the university failed to protect its Jewish students.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

The bill is currently awaiting referral to a policy committee in the Senate.

Gabriel and Wiener also told POLITICO that they're considering further legislation on the issue.

## WHAT ARE SOME STORIES ON THE BILL?

[Read POLITICO news on SB 1287.](#)

*Blake Jones contributed to this report.*

