
SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Senator Jesse Arreguin, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: AB 992 **Hearing Date:** June 24, 2025
Author: Irwin
Version: April 28, 2025
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: AB

Subject: *Peace officers*

HISTORY

Source: California Police Chiefs Association

Prior Legislation: SB 1122 (Seyarto), died in Assembly, 2024
AB 458 (Jones-Sawyer), as introduced (later amended to include unrelated contents), 2023
AB 2229 (L. Rivas), Ch. 959, Stats. of 2022
AB 655 (Kalra), Ch. 854, Stats. of 2022
SB 960 (Skinner), Ch. 825, Stats. of 2022
AB 89 (Jones-Sawyer), Ch. 405, Stats. of 2021
AB 846 (Burke), Ch. 322, Stats. of 2020

Support: Arcadia Police Officers' Association; Brea Police Association; Burbank Police Officers' Association; California Association of Highway Patrolmen; California Association of School Police Chiefs; California Coalition of School Safety Professionals; California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office; California Narcotic Officers' Association; California Reserve Peace Officers Association; California State Sheriffs Association; Claremont Police Officers Association; Corona Police Officers Association; Culver City Police Officers' Association; Fullerton Police Officers' Association; League of California Cities; Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department; Los Angeles School Police Management Association; Los Angeles School Police Officers Association; Murrieta Police Officers' Association; Newport Beach Police Association; Palos Verdes Police Officers Association; Peace Officers Research Association of California; Placer County Deputy Sheriffs' Association; Pomona Police Officers' Association; Riverside Police Officers Association; Riverside Sheriffs' Association

Opposition: None known

Assembly Floor Vote: 69 - 0

PURPOSE

The purpose of this bill is to, commencing January 1, 2031, require a peace officer to obtain either an associate's degree, bachelor's degree, modern policing degree, professional policing certificate, or otherwise have specified military or out-of-state law enforcement experience, within 36 months of receiving their basic certificate from the Commission on Peace Officer

Standards and Training (POST), as specified, and to create the Statewide Law Enforcement Recruitment Task Force, as specified.

Existing law establishes POST to set minimum standards for the recruitment and training of peace officers, develop training courses and curriculum, and establish a professional certificate program that awards different levels of certification based on training, education, experience, and other relevant prerequisites. (Pen. Code, §§ 830-832.10; 13500 et seq.)

Existing law establishes the powers of POST, including among others, to develop and implement programs to increase the effectiveness of law enforcement, to secure the cooperation of state-level peace officers, agencies, and bodies having jurisdiction over systems of public higher education in continuing the development of college-level training and education programs. (Pen. Code, §§ 830-832.10; 13500 et seq.)

Existing law requires every peace officer in the state to satisfactorily complete an introductory training course prescribed by POST. (Pen. Code, § 832, subd. (a).)

Existing law provides that each class of public officers or employees declared by law to be peace officers shall meet specified minimum standards, including that they be a high school graduate, pass the General Education Development Test or other high school equivalency test, or have attained a two-year, four-year, or advanced degree from an accredited college or university, as specified. (Gov. Code, § 1031.)

Existing law specifies that it shall not be construed to preclude the adoption of additional or higher standards. (Gov. Code, § 1031, subd. (g).)

Existing law requires any person designated as a peace officer, notwithstanding designated exceptions, or any peace officer employed by an agency that participates in a POST program must be at least 21 years of age at the time of appointment. (Gov. Code, § 1031.4, subd. (a).)

Existing law provides that any person, who as of December 31, 2021, is currently enrolled in a basic academy or is employed as a peace officer by a public entity in California is not subject to the age requirement of 21 years of age. (Gov. Code, § 1031.4, subd. (b).)

Existing law requires representatives from POST, stakeholders from law enforcement, the California State University, and community organizations to serve as advisors to the Office of the Chancellor of the Community Colleges to develop a modern policing degree program. (Pen. Code, § 13511.1, subd. (a).)

Existing law requires the Office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges (hereinafter, "OCC") to report recommendations to the Legislature outlining a plan to implement the modern policing degree program on, or by, June 1, 2023. (Pen. Code, § 13511.1, subd. (a).)

Existing law requires the report above to include the following:

- Focus on courses pertinent on law enforcement including, but not limited to, psychology, communications, history, ethnic studies, law, and courses determined to develop necessary critical thinking skills and emotional intelligence;

- Allowances for prior law enforcement experience, appropriate work experience, postsecondary education experience, or military experience;
- Both the modern policing degree program and bachelor's degree program in the discipline of their choosing as minimum education requirements for employment as a peace officer;
- Recommendations to adopt financial assistance for students of historically underserved and disadvantaged communities with barriers to higher education access to fulfill the minimum requirements to be adopted for employment as a peace officer. (Pen. Code, § 13511.1, subd. (a)(1)-(4).)

Existing law requires POST to approve and adopt the education criteria for peace officers within two years from the submission of the report to the Legislature. (Pen. Code, § 13511.1, subd. (c).)

Existing law requires POST to adopt rules establishing minimum standards relating to the recruitment, training and fitness of state and local law enforcement officers. (Pen. Code, §§ 13510 & 13510.5.)

This bill provides that commencing January 1, 2031, each state officer and employee designated as a peace officer, as specified, or any other peace officer employed by an agency that participates in the POST program shall attain one or more of the following degrees, experience or certificates within 36 months of receiving the basic certificate by POST:

- An associate's degree from a community college that is accredited by an agency recognized by the United States Department of Education.
- A bachelor's degree or other advanced degree from a college or university that is accredited by an agency recognized by the United States Department of Education.
- At least two years of military experience in good standing, with an honorable discharge if military service has concluded.
- At least two years of law enforcement experience from another state, with separation in good standing.
- A modern policing degree
- A professional policing certificate

This bill specifies that a modern policing degree shall meet all of the following criteria:

- Require at least 60 semester units or 90 quarter units of degree-applicable credit coursework from a college or university that is accredited by an agency recognized by the United States Department of Education.
- Award credits for required commission-certified academy course instruction.
- Offer courses that include, but are not limited to, the following list of subjects:

- Communications
- Psychology
- Writing
- Ethics
- Criminal Justice

This bill specifies that a professional policing certificate may be offered by any accredited college or university, and shall meet the following criteria:

- Require at least 16 semester units or 24 quarter units of degree-applicable credit coursework from a college or university that is accredited by an agency recognized by the United States Department of Education.
- Offer courses that include, but are not limited to, the following list of subjects:
 - Communications
 - Psychology
 - Writing
 - Ethics
 - Criminal Justice

This bill provides that coursework completed as part of the POST-certified academy shall count toward the modern policing degree and professional policing certificate and may count toward any associate's degree or bachelor's degree obtained to comply with this bill.

This bill specifies that coursework completed as part of the POST-certified academy shall not count toward the entirety of the units required for a professional policing certificate.

This bill provides that the educational requirement therein does not apply to any person who, as of December 31, 2030, is currently enrolled in a basic academy or is employed as a peace officer by a public entity in California.

This bill deletes the provision of existing law requiring POST to approve and adopt education criteria for peace officers based on the report submitted to the Legislature by the OCC within 2 years of that submission.

This bill creates the Statewide Law Enforcement Recruitment Task Force with the goal of identifying and recruiting candidates for law enforcement agencies.

This bill provides that the task force shall be comprised of management and rank and file representatives from county sheriff departments, municipal police agencies, the California Highway Patrol, and other law enforcement agencies.

COMMENTS

1. Need for This Bill

According to the Author:

Public safety is core to Californians' quality of life, so ensuring we have peace officers who have completed thorough preparation is of critical importance. The Legislature must act on our prior direction to the law enforcement and higher education community by putting into statute several pathways for peace officers to demonstrate their preparation, so that we all can realize the benefits of a modern police force throughout California.

2. Law Enforcement Recruitment and Retention Issues

In recent years, law enforcement agencies around the country have experienced mounting challenges related to the recruitment and retention of sworn personnel. A survey conducted by the Police Executive Research Forum in June 2021 found that the departments surveyed were, on average, filling only 93% of the authorized number of positions available.¹ While this may not seem striking at first glance, this number belies the fact that many larger departments are seeing dramatic drops in staffing. In Seattle, a record 180 officers left the police department in 2020, and another 170 departed in 2021, putting the agency at its lowest relative staffing level in history.² In Minneapolis, a severe shortage of officers recently meant that on-duty officers are able to do little else besides respond to 911 calls.³ According to another recent survey conduct by the International Association of Chief of Police, 78% of respondent agencies reported having difficulty in recruiting qualified candidates, and 25% reported having to reduce or eliminate certain agency services, units or positions because of staffing difficulties.⁴ According to a 2024 survey of 1,158 agencies nationwide, 70% of respondents reported that recruitment is more difficult now (at the time of the survey) than it was 5 years prior.⁵

California has not been immune from officer recruitment and retention challenges. Between September 2021 and February 2022, San Diego lost over 100 officers, with 2022 being the first year the city expects to see retirements and departures outpace new hires.⁶ Similarly, as of August 2021, the Los Angeles Police Department had 296 empty officer positions and almost 500 fewer officers on duty than it did the previous year, and as of November 2021, San

¹ "Survey on Police Workforce Trends." *Police Executive Research Forum Special Report*. 11 June 2021. <https://www.policeforum.org/workforcesurveyjune2021> ; See also *The Workforce Crisis, and What Police Agencies are Doing About it*. Police Research Executive Forum. September 2019. [WorkforceCrisis.pdf](#)

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ "The State of Recruitment: A Crisis for Law Enforcement." *International Association of Police Chiefs*. https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/239416_IACP_RecruitmentBR_HR_0.pdf

⁵ "A State of Recruitment and Retention: A Continuing Crisis for Policing. 2024 Survey Results. *International Association of Police Chiefs*. [2024Recruitment&RetentionSurveyResults.pdf](#)

⁶ "San Diego facing new police officer vacancy crisis blamed partly on vaccine mandate." *The San Diego Union-Tribune*. 3 February 2022. <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/politics/story/2022-02-03/san-diego-facing-new-police-officer-vacancy-crisis-blamed-partly-on-vaccine-mandate>

Francisco was short 533 officers relative to full staffing levels.⁷ According to a recent study conducted by the Public Policy Institute of California, between 2020 and 2021, the state lost 2,100 sworn staff and about 1,100 civil staff, and the number of sworn officers per 100,000 residents is the lowest since 1995.⁸

While some argue that much of the shortfall is a direct result of vaccine mandates for public employees related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the scope and duration of the shortage suggests that larger structural forces are at play. For instance, departments staffed by a higher proportion of baby boomers are seeing a wave of retirements, at a time when the attitude of millennials and “gen-Xers” toward police are changing. In addition, increased awareness of police misconduct, especially in low-income areas and communities of color, has sown greater mistrust of police in these communities, making it more difficult for agencies to draw local applicants. Economically, low unemployment rates and a strong job market mean that prospective applicants have multiple options when seeking employment, many of which involve less rigorous entrance requirements.⁹

To address the staffing shortfall, law enforcement agencies have pursued a variety of potential solutions, such as increasing pay and benefits, scaling back job requirements, and hiring more non-sworn support staff. Some states, including California, have sought to address the problem and expand the applicant pool by removing or modifying officer citizenship requirements or raising the maximum age for eligibility.¹⁰

3. Existing Prerequisites for Employment as a Peace Officer in California and Academic Requirements Generally

Existing law sets forth several requirements that must be met by individuals seeking to become peace officers in California. With regard to criminal record, no person can become a peace officer who has been convicted of a felony, who has been charged with a felony and judged incompetent, who has been found not guilty by reason of insanity, or who has been adjudged addicted or in danger of becoming addicted to narcotics.¹¹ Additionally, every prospective peace officer must meet all of the following minimum standards: be legally authorized to work in the United States under federal law, be 18 years of age or older, be fingerprinted for purposes of disclosing a criminal record, be of good moral character, as determined by background investigation, and be found to be free from any physical, emotional, or mental condition, including bias against race or ethnicity, gender, nationality, religion, disability, or sexual orientation, that might adversely affect the exercise of the powers of a peace officer.¹²

In terms of education, it is worth noting that academic requirements for peace officers vary by jurisdiction and on the type and level of peace officer position. In California, prospective officers are required to have no more than a high school diploma or GED and must complete a certain

⁷ “LAPD is short about 300 officers but the chief hopes to fill the gap.” *Los Angeles Daily News*. 20 August 2021.

<https://www.dailynews.com/2021/08/20/lapd-is-short-about-300-officers-but-the-chief-plans-to-fill-the-gap/> ;

“SFPD could be short 533 officers amid staffing strains from the vaccine mandate.” *ABC 7 News*. 1 November 2021.

<https://abc7news.com/san-francisco-vaccine-mandate-sfpd-sf-city-workers-on-leave/11188916/>

⁸ “Law Enforcement Staffing in California.” PPIC. February 2023. <https://www.ppic.org/publication/law-enforcement-staffing-in-california/>

⁹ For a more comprehensive analysis, see Wilson, Jeremy, et al. “Police Recruitment and Retention for the New Millennium.” *RAND Corporation*. 2010.

https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2010/RAND_MG959.pdf

¹⁰ See SB 960 (Skinner, Ch. 825, Stats. of 2022), and AB 1435 (Lackey, 2023), vetoed by the Governor.

¹¹ Gov. Code, § 1029, subd. (a).)

¹² Gov. Code, § 1031, subds. (a)–(f).)

number of training hours through POST to earn a basic certificate.¹³ However, California law enforcement officers are already much more likely to have some college education or an associate degree compared to full-time workers in other occupations, and California has more college-educated officers than all but three states.¹⁴ Though with recent increases in, and public focus on, incidents of excessive force by peace officers, there have been growing efforts to establish higher baseline educational requirements for officers. Studies have shown that officers with education beyond a GED or high school diploma use force less often, use lower levels of force, and receive fewer complaints and disciplinary actions than their non-college educated counterparts.¹⁵

4. Prior Legislation

In 2021, multiple bills were introduced which would have increased educational requirements for prospective California peace officers. Senate Bill 387 (Portantino) would have required peace officer applicants to complete at least some college courses in order to obtain a basic certificate from POST, but was never taken up on the Senate Floor.¹⁶ AB 89 (Jones-Sawyer), Chapter 405, Statutes of 2021 as originally introduced would have required prospective peace officers to be at least 25 years of age or, if the prospective officer is under 25, to have a bachelor's degree. However, that measure was ultimately amended to change the age requirement from 18 to 21 years of age, and to require the OCC to develop a modern policing degree program with POST and other stakeholders. AB 89 also required that stakeholder group to submit a report to the Legislature outlining a plan to implement that program by June 1, 2023. That bill further specified that the OCC's recommendations must include both the modern policing degree program and bachelor's degree in the discipline of the work group's choosing as minimum education requirements for employment as a peace officer. Finally, AB 89 required POST to adopt the education criteria for peace officers within 2 years of the submission of the report to the Legislature by the OCC.

In 2023, AB 458 (Jones-Sawyer), as originally introduced, would have codified that expected recommendation and required prospective officers to obtain a modern policing degree or bachelor's degree prior to receiving their basic certificate from POST, unless the officer was already employed by a public agency or enrolled in a basic academy.¹⁷

In November 2023, the OCC task force released its final report and recommendations as required by AB 89. Of particular relevance here, the OCC task force recommended the inclusion of “both the ‘modern policing degree’ program and bachelor’s degree in the discipline of their choosing

¹³ Gov. Code, § 1031, subd. (e); Pen. Code, § 832.

¹⁴ “New Law Raises Standards for Police Officers.” *Public Police Institute of California*. 26 January 2022. [New Law Raises Standards for Police Officers - Public Policy Institute of California \(ppic.org\)](#) ; “Mandate Higher Education for California Police Officers.” *Cal matters*. 26 March 2021. [Mandate higher education for California police officers - CalMatters](#)

¹⁵ *Ibid*; Rydberg, Jason et. al. “The Effect of Higher Education on Police Behavior.” Police Quarterly: Volume 13, Issue 1. 10 January 2010. [The Effect of Higher Education on Police Behavior - Jason Rydberg, William Terrill, 2010 \(sagepub.com\)](https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/crmjusbhv35&id=486&collection=journals&index=1) ; Mcelvain, James and Augustine Kposowa. “Police Officer Characteristics and the Likelihood of Using Deadly Force.” Criminal Justice and Behavior: Vol. 35, No 4. [https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/crmjusbhv35&id=486&collection=journals&index=](https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/crmjusbhv35&id=486&collection=journals&index=1)

¹⁶ The police-related contents of SB 387 were ultimately removed and new language was inserted related to pupil health.

¹⁷ After being heard in this committee, AB 458 was amended to remove its contents entirely and replace them with a bill outside this committee's jurisdiction.

as minimum education requirements for employments as a peace officer.”¹⁸ The report recommended that “the California Community Colleges should develop the Modern Policing Degree with transferability into a baccalaureate degree in mind,” and should “develop a baccalaureate degree in Policing.”¹⁹ Given the other recommendations regarding minimum educational standards, the OCCC task force likely did not intend to require prospective officers to obtain *both* an associate’s degree *and* a bachelor’s degree.

In response to the OCC report, SB 1122 (Seyarto) of the 2023-2024 Legislative Session, sought to clarify that any requirement for the completion of a bachelor’s degree or associate’s degree adopted pursuant to the recommendations of the OCC may be satisfied after the completion of the POST program, and that an individual may complete a bachelor’s or associate’s degree within 36 months of their employment as a peace officer. This bill was passed by both houses of the Legislature but was recalled from Engrossing and Enrolling due to a fatal typographical error. AB 852 (Jones-Sawyer) of the 2023-2024 Legislative Session, similarly would have required a peace to attain a modern policing degree, or a bachelor’s or other advanced degree from an accredited college or university, within 36 months of commencing their employment as a peace officer. AB 852 similarly was passed by both houses of the Legislature but was never sent to the Governor.

5. Effect of This Bill

This bill is the latest legislative effort to establish and clarify minimum educational standards for peace officers. This bill outlines six potential ways for prospective California peace officer to comply with the minimum educational standards recommended in the OCC report, which would be required in addition to the high school diploma/GED requirement in existing law. Specifically, this bill would require, commencing January 1, 2031, a prospective officer to attain one or more of the following degrees, experience or certificates within 36 months of receiving their basic certificate from POST: 1) an associate’s degree from a community college; 2) a bachelor’s degree or other advanced degree from an accredited college or university; 3) a modern policing degree, as specified; 4) a “professional policing certificate,” as specified; or 5) have at least two years of military or out of state law enforcement experience, subject to an honorable discharge (if military service is concluded) or separation in good standing, respectively.

Although AB 89 did provide that the OCCs recommendations must include allowances for prior law enforcement or military experience to satisfy a portion of employment eligibility requirements, the Committee may wish to consider whether 2 years of military or out-of-state law enforcement experience is adequate to prepare someone for employment as a peace officer in California, especially given the bill’s other education requirements. The Author and Committee may wish to consider requiring individuals who obtain employment as California peace officers after gaining the prerequisite military or out-of-state law enforcement experience to complete a policing certificate within 2 years of becoming a California peace officer.

The bill specifies that a modern policing degree must require at least 60 semester units or 90 quarter units of degree-applicable credit coursework, and that a professional policing certificate must require at least 16 semester units or 24 quarter units of degree-applicable credit

¹⁸ “California Assembly Bill 89 Modern Policing Degree Task Force Report and Recommendations.” California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office. Published 6 November 2023. [California Assembly Bill 89 Modern Policing Degree Task Force Report and Recommendations \(cccco.edu\)](https://www.cccco.edu/ab89-report). See pp. 8-9.

¹⁹ *Id.* at p. 9.

coursework. Both the modern policing degree and professional policing certificate must offer courses on specified topics, including, but not limited to communications, psychology, writing, ethics and criminal justice. The bill further states that coursework completed as part of the commission certified academy counts toward the modern policing degree and policing certificate, and may count toward any associate's degree or bachelor's degree. The bill also includes a provision providing that "coursework completed as part of the [POST]-certified academy shall not count toward the entirety of units required for a professional policing certificate." This provision was clearly intended to prevent a policing certificate from being obtained solely by applying academy coursework to the unit requirement, but may be misinterpreted to mean that academy coursework cannot be used at all toward the units required for a policing certificate. The Author and Committee may wish to clarify this.

Another provision of the bill strikes a provision of existing law enacted by AB 89 requiring POST to approve and adopt education criteria for peace officers based on the OCC recommendations within 2 years of the submission of the OCC report to the Legislature. The import of this provision will be discussed further in comment 6.

Finally, the bill establishes the Statewide Law Enforcement Recruitment Task Force, with the goal of identifying and recruiting candidates for law enforcement agencies, and comprised of management and rank and file representative from county sheriff departments, municipal police agencies, the California Highway Patrol, and other law enforcement organizations. However, the bill contains no further information regarding the task force, such as how many members it has, how often it meets, how members are appointed and for what term, and what, if anything, it should be responsible for producing. The Author and Committee may wish to prescribe some of these elements and potentially allow the Governor, the Senate and the Assembly to appoint certain members.

6. Related Legislation

SB 385 (Seyarto), an urgency measure, strikes a provision of existing law enacted by AB 89 requiring POST to approve and adopt education criteria for peace officers based on the OCC recommendations within 2 years of the submission of the OCC report to the Legislature. As mentioned above, this bill makes an identical change. If SB 385 is enacted prior to this bill and thus immediately removes the provision regarding POST's adoption of educational criteria from existing law, this bill will need to be amended to remove that provision so as not to modify an out-of-date statute.

7. Argument in Support

According to the Peace Officers Research Association of California:

AB 992 builds upon the work of a legislatively directed working group that, in 2023, provided recommendations for creating a modern policing degree. Rather than relying on a single path, this bill expands the approach by offering multiple higher education options that reflect the diverse experiences and strengths of future law enforcement professionals. These include associate's degrees, professional certificates, prior military service, and other relevant credentials.

AB 992 refines the previous framework by allowing greater flexibility in how education requirements can be met, rather than requiring a specific degree program to be approved by the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST). This change creates a more realistic and adaptable structure for officer education and recruitment. The bill also establishes a statewide task force to support recruitment efforts and encourage broader access to law enforcement careers across California's communities. PORAC believes AB 992 is a thoughtful and balanced approach that supports the continued advancement of our profession, while keeping pathways to service open and attainable for individuals from all backgrounds. Providing officers with strong educational foundations—without imposing unnecessary barriers—will help strengthen both public safety and community trust. Again, PORAC strongly supports AB 992.

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