

JANUARY 29, 2026 | STATE & LOCAL TRENDS

[Client Alert] New California Employment Law – “Workplace Know Your Rights Act”

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California enacted a new law called the “Workplace Know Your Rights Act” (Senate Bill 294), now Labor Code sections 1550-1559. This law provides emergency contact and anti-retaliation obligations in the event an employee is arrested or detained at work. This requirement is mandatory and has upcoming deadlines.

Two important deadlines for California employers: February 1, 2026, and March 30, 2026.

By February 1, 2026, Notice Provided

Notice must be provided to employees by **February 1, 2026**. Thereafter, the employees must receive the form notice, which will likely need to be amended year to year, on an annual basis. This notice must be provided in the manner employers usually provide such notices – including by email, by hand, or even by posting in a breakroom. The law even permits receipt by text message. Employers must ensure that the method provided does not run afoul of other limitations, for example restrictions on the use of a personal device or prohibitions against off-the-clock work.

This law addresses seven specific areas, which are detailed in the form notice, including:

- Information about workers’ compensation, including disability pay and medical care for work-related injuries or illness and contact information;
- Right to notice of an I-9 inspection by immigration agencies;
- Protection against unfair immigration-related practices;
- Constitutional rights when interacting with law enforcement in the workplace;
- Labor organizing rights;
- Description of new laws affecting workplace rights as provided by the Labor Commissioner; and
- Enforcement agencies that may enforce the underlying rights in the notice.

The DIR has created a sample notice (available here [SB294 Know Your Right Notice](#) – English and [Aviso sobre sus derechos conforme a la SB294](#) – Spanish) Employers are also free to create an equivalent notice.

By March 30, 2026, Emergency Contact Designation Provided

By March 30, 2026, as well as at the time of hire for each new employee, employers must provide employees with the opportunity to name an emergency contact and indicate whether the emergency contact should be notified if the employee is arrested or detained.

If the employee elects for the contact to be notified, then the employer should contact the designated contact if (1) the employee is arrested or detained on their worksite; and (2) if the arrest or detention occurred during work hours. The employer has to have actual knowledge of the arrest or detention of the employee in order to contact the designated contact.

Other Key Considerations

Anti-Retaliation and Penalties

Employers are not allowed to terminate, threaten or take any adverse action against an employee for exercising or attempting to exercise their rights under this new law. Of particular note is the amount of penalties assessed for not complying with this new requirement. **Penalties for violations are set at up to \$500 per employee per violation.** An employer that violates the requirements to notify a designated emergency contact shall be subject to a **penalty up to \$500 per day with a maximum penalty of \$10,000 per employee.** The law also permits public prosecutors to enforce this law.

Recordkeeping Requirement

Employers **must** keep proof of notice for at least **three years**. This includes the signed acknowledgment forms, digital read receipts, confirmation emails or system logs.

Training Requirements

The bill also requires training the employees on these requirements. The DIR has agreed to provide educational videos by July 1, 2026. In the interim, your Conn Maciel Carey California employment law team is available to assist with the development of the notice, roll out of the new requirements and any training needed.

Takeaways

With the deadlines just around the corner, employers should prioritize providing the Notice to their employees. Beyond this initial notification and maintenance of the record (including when the notice was provided and by whom), here are some additional considerations.

- Ensure that providing the notice does not implicate other provisions of the Labor Code, such as off-the-clock work or requirements to reimburse for reasonable business expenses;
- Update onboarding and policy documents;
- Prepare emergency contact procedures ahead of March 30, 2026; and
- Train managers and HR teams on how these rights apply.

It is vital to pay attention to these new requirements. Failure to properly roll out this new requirement can increase potential PAGA penalties for a violation of the Labor Code. For worksites governed by a collective bargaining agreement, the law permits negotiating around this new requirement specifically under Labor Code

section 1556.

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