

California Employers Face February 1 Deadline Under Workplace Know Your Rights Act

Labor & Employment Law Update

By Margaret Valenti on January 16, 2026

State-level employment regulation continues to evolve in California independently of broader federal enforcement priorities. On October 12, 2025, California enacted the Workplace Know Your Rights Act (S.B. 294) intended to "equip workers with knowledge of their rights that they can also use to protect their families, neighbors, and communities at a time of potential disruption, dislocation, and fear for many Californians." The Act contains five primary requirements.

Employers must:

1. Distribute a Notice of Workplace Rights

The Know Your Rights Act requires employers to affirmatively provide employees with information about their workplace rights under state and federal law, including:

- The right to workers' compensation benefits.
- The right to notice of inspection by immigration agencies.
- Protection against unfair immigration-related practices against a person exercising protected rights.
- The right to organize a union or engage in concerted activity in the workplace.
- Constitutional rights when interacting with law enforcement at the workplace.

To that end, the California Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) has published a notice, which employers may use to comply with the Act. Importantly, distribution is not a one-time obligation. Employers must provide the notice to (1) all current employees by **February 1, 2026**, and annually thereafter; (2) new hires at the time of hire; and (3) to any collective bargaining representatives, provided annually. Employers should plan now to incorporate this notice into onboarding materials and annual compliance workflows.

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The written notice should be in the language the employer normally uses to communicate employment-related information to the employee and which the employee understands. If the DIR has not published a notice in that language, then the written notice may be provided in English. The DIR has released a Spanish-language version of the notice.

2. Keep Records of Compliance with Notice Requirement

Employers must keep records of their compliance with the requirement for three years.

3. Collect Emergency Contact Info for Employees Arrested or Detained

Employers must provide employees with the opportunity to name an emergency contact that should be notified if the employee is arrested or detained.

Employers have until **March 30, 2026** to comply for existing employees. For new employees hired after March 30, 2026, the opportunity to provide this contact info at the time of hire.

4. Reach Out to Emergency Contacts if Employee Is Arrested or Detained

Of course, employers must use the collected information to notify the emergency contact in the event an employee is arrested or detained on the employer's worksite, during work hours, during the performance of the employee's job, or if the employee has actual knowledge that an employee has been arrested or detained.

5. Abide by Anti-Retaliation Provisions

The Act prohibits employers from retaliating against employees for exercising or attempting to exercise any rights under the Act, including filing a complaint with or cooperating in an investigation by the Labor Commissioner pursuant to the Act.

A Broader Compliance Pattern

California continues to add layers of compliance that require careful integration into onboarding processes, annual compliance calendars, and labor-relations practices. Even seemingly straightforward notice obligations can create risk if overlooked or inconsistently applied. To ensure compliance, employers should consider:

- Updating onboarding materials and electronic onboarding platforms
- Establishing a notice-distribution process

- Retaining records documenting compliance

As California continues to chart its own course on workplace protections, employers—particularly those operating in multiple states—should remain attentive to how these incremental changes reflect broader regulatory expectations.¹

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