

Date of Hearing: April 28, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
Lori D. Wilson, Chair
AB 630 (Mark González) – As Amended March 24, 2025

SUBJECT: Abandoned recreational vehicles

SUMMARY: Allows a public agency to dispose of a recreational vehicle (RV) it removes if the vehicle is estimated to have a value of \$4,000 or less. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Allows a public agency that removed or caused the removal of a RV, as defined in Section 18010 of the Health and Safety Code, to dispose of the RV if the value of the vehicle is \$4,000 or less.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Defines a “vehicle” as a device used to propel, move, or draw people or property on a highway, excluding devices moved exclusively by human power or used on stationary rails or tracks. (Vehicle Code (VEH) section 670)
- 2) Defines a “recreational vehicle” to mean both of the following:
 - a) A motor home, travel trailer, truck camper, or camping trailer, with or without motive power, designed for human habitation for recreational, emergency, or other occupancy, that meets all of the following criteria: (Health and Safety Code (HSC) 18010)
 - i. It contains less than 320 square feet of internal living room area, excluding built-in equipment, including, but not limited to, wardrobe, closets, cabinets, kitchen units or fixtures, and bath or toilet rooms;
 - ii. It contains 400 square feet or less of gross area measured at maximum horizontal projections;
 - iii. It is built on a single chassis; and,
 - iv. It is either self-propelled, truck-mounted, or permanently towable on the highways without a permit.
 - b) A park trailer as defined in Section 18009.3 of the HSC.
- 3) Defines “park trailer” as a trailer designed for human habitation for recreational or seasonal use only, that meets all of the following requirements: (HSC 18009.3)
 - a) It contains 400 square feet or less of gross floor area, excluding loft area space if that loft area space meets the requirements of subdivision (b) and Section 18033. It may not exceed 14 feet in width at the maximum horizontal projection;
 - b) It is built upon a single chassis; and,
 - c) It may only be transported upon the public highways with a permit issued pursuant to Section 35780 of the Vehicle Code.

- 4) Makes it unlawful for a peace officer or an unauthorized person to remove an unattended vehicle from a highway to a garage or to any other place except as provided for by California statute. (VEH 22650 (a))
- 5) Specifies that any removal of a vehicle is a seizure under the Fourth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States and Section 13 of Article I of the California Constitution, and shall be reasonable and subject to the limits set forth in Fourth Amendment jurisprudence. A removal pursuant to an authority, including, but not limited to, as provided in Section 22651, that is based on community caretaking, is only reasonable if the removal is necessary to achieve the community caretaking need, such as ensuring the safe flow of traffic or protecting property from theft or vandalism. (VEH 22650(b))
- 6) Specifies that those law enforcement and other agencies identified in this chapter as having the authority to remove vehicles shall also have the authority to provide hearings in compliance with the provisions of Section 22852. During these hearings the storing agency shall have the burden of establishing the authority for, and the validity of, the removal. (VEH 22650(c))
- 7) Allows a city, county, or city and county to adopt an ordinance establishing procedures for the abatement and removal, as public nuisances, of abandoned, wrecked, dismantled, or inoperative vehicles or parts thereof from private or public property. (VEH 22660)
- 8) Specifies that whenever a vehicle has been removed to a garage, the keeper shall have a lien dependent upon possession for his or her compensation for towage and for caring for and keeping safe the vehicle for a period not exceeding 60 days or, if an application for an authorization to conduct a lien sale has been filed pursuant to Section 3068.1 of the Civil Code within 30 days after the removal of the vehicle to the garage. Possession of the vehicle is deemed to arise when a vehicle is removed and is in transit, or when vehicle recovery operations or load salvage operations that have been requested by a law enforcement agency have begun at the scene: (VEH 22851(a))
 - a) Whenever a vehicle owner returns to a vehicle that is in possession of a towing company prior to the removal of the vehicle, the owner may regain possession of the vehicle from the towing company if the owner pays the towing company the towing charges.
- 9) Specifies that no lien shall attach to any personal property in or on the vehicle. The personal property in or on the vehicle shall be given to the current registered owner or the owner's authorized agent upon demand and without charge during normal business hours. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, normal business hours are Monday to Friday, inclusive, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., inclusive, except state holidays. A gate fee may be charged for returning property after normal business hours, weekends, and state holidays. The maximum hourly charge for nonbusiness hours releases shall be one-half the hourly tow rate charged for initially towing the vehicle, or less. The lienholder is not responsible for property after any vehicle has been disposed of. (VEH 22851(b))

- 10) States that whenever a peace officer or any other employee of a public agency removes, or causes the removal of, a and the public agency or, at the request of the public agency, the lienholder determines the estimated value of the vehicle is five hundred dollars (\$500) or less, the public agency that removed, or caused the removal of, the vehicle shall cause the disposal of the vehicle under this section, subject to all of the following requirements: (VEH 22851.3)
- a) Not less than 72 hours before the vehicle is removed, the peace officer or the authorized public employee has securely attached to the vehicle a distinctive notice which states that the vehicle will be removed by the public agency;
 - b) Immediately after removal of the vehicle, the public agency which removed, or caused the removal of, the vehicle shall notify the Stolen Vehicle System of the Department of Justice in Sacramento of the removal;
 - c) The public agency that removed, or caused the removal of, the vehicle or, at the request of the public agency, the lienholder shall obtain a copy of the names and addresses of all persons having an interest in the vehicle, if any, from the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) either directly or by use of the California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System. This subdivision does not require the public agency or lienholder to obtain a copy of the actual record on file at the DMV;
 - d) Within 48 hours of the removal, excluding weekends and holidays, the public agency that removed, or caused the removal of, the vehicle or, at the request of the public agency, the lienholder shall send a notice to the registered and legal owners at their addresses of record with the Department of Motor Vehicles, and to any other person known to have an interest in the vehicle. A notice sent by the public agency shall be sent by certified or first-class mail, and a notice sent by the lienholder shall be sent by certified mail. The notice shall include all of the following information:
 - i. The name, address, and telephone number of the public agency providing the notice;
 - ii. The location of the place of storage and description of the vehicle which shall include, if available, the vehicle make, license plate number, vehicle identification number, and mileage;
 - iii. The authority and purpose for the removal of the vehicle;
 - iv. A statement that the vehicle may be disposed of 15 days from the date of the notice; and,
 - v. A statement that the owners and interested persons, or their agents, have the opportunity for a poststorage hearing before the public agency that removed, or caused the removal of, the vehicle to determine the validity of the storage if a request for a hearing is made in person, in writing, or by telephone within 10 days from the date of notice; that, if the owner or interested person, or his or her agent, disagrees with the decision of the public agency, the decision may be reviewed pursuant to Section 11523 of the Government Code; and that during the time of the initial hearing, or during the time the decision is being reviewed pursuant to Section 11523 of the Government Code, the vehicle in question may not be disposed of.
 - e) An authorization for disposal may not be issued by the public agency that removed, or caused the removal of, the vehicle to a lienholder who is storing the vehicle prior to the conclusion of a requested poststorage hearing or any judicial review of that hearing;

- f) If, after 15 days from the notification date, the vehicle remains unclaimed and the towing and storage fees have not been paid, and if no request for a poststorage hearing was requested or a poststorage hearing was not attended, the public agency that removed, or caused the removal of, the vehicle shall provide to the lienholder who is storing the vehicle, on a form approved by the Department of Motor Vehicles, authorization to dispose of the vehicle. The lienholder may request the public agency to provide the authorization to dispose of the vehicle; and,
- g) If the vehicle is claimed by the owner or his or her agent within 15 days of the notice date, the lienholder who is storing the vehicle may collect reasonable fees for services rendered, but may not collect lien sale fees as provided in VC 22851.12.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: Californians have consistently cited homelessness as a top issue facing the state, and in 2024, homelessness reached record highs. Based on the 2024 point-in-time (PIT) count of people experiencing homelessness on a given night, over 24% (187,000) of the nation's people experiencing homelessness were in California, a 3.1% increase from 2023. Two in three of those experiencing homelessness in California were unsheltered.

Continuums of Care (CoCs) are local coalitions of government and non-profit entities that provide services to people experiencing homelessness and report annual PIT counts that align with California's counties or county groups. Over 70% of people experiencing homelessness in California were in the 10 CoCs with the largest homeless population in 2024. In these 10 CoCs, sheltered homelessness rose by 10% while unsheltered homelessness fell by 3% and total homelessness in these 10 CoCs grew by 1.3%. The lower rate of increasing homelessness in these 10 CoCs indicates that jurisdictions with smaller homeless populations experienced a higher rate of homelessness growth (8%) comparatively.

Homelessness arises from an interaction between structural factors, such as the shortage of affordable housing and deficiencies in the social safety net, and individual factors, such as substance use and childhood adversity. The affordable housing landscape in the US is bleak. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, in 2021 there were 33 units of affordable housing available for every 100 extremely low income households, defined as those earning less than 30% of the area median income. Regions where affordable housing is particularly scarce have elevated rates of homelessness. Only one in four US households that are eligible for a housing choice voucher (a rental subsidy also known as Section 8) receive one, because of a lack of federal funding to provide subsidies for all who are eligible. Rising home prices and rent have outpaced home building in the state, and California has among the lowest homeownership rates in the country. Over a quarter of Californians, including four in ten lower-income adults, worry about their housing costs every day or almost every day. Within this context, people with individual vulnerabilities, such as having a substance use disorder, severe mental illness, or a history of incarceration, are at heightened risk for homelessness.

Who is experiencing homelessness? According to the 2024 PIT in California, of those experiencing homelessness, 36.9% identified as Hispanic or Latino, 36.4% white, 22.2% Black, African American or African, 3.0% American Indian or Alaska Native, 2.0% Asian or Asian American, and 0.9% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. The stark racial disparities within California's homeless population are highlighted when comparing those experiencing homelessness with the overall population of California. According to the 2020 Census,

approximately 39.4% identified as Hispanic or Latino, 41.2% white, 15.4% Asian, 5.7% Black or African American, 1.6% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.4% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.

When considering the gender makeup of those experiencing homelessness, 64.0% were men, 33.7% were women, and the remaining people identified as transgender, gender questioning, culturally specific identity, different identity, non-binary, or more than one gender.

Additionally, the homeless population is aging reflecting a nationwide trend. In 2023 almost half of single homeless adults in California were ages fifty and older, compared with 11% in San Francisco in 1990. Research has shown that homeless adults experience accelerated aging, with premature onset of chronic medical conditions, functional and cognitive impairments, and high rates of age-adjusted mortality.

Who lives in a vehicle? According to the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) report *Who Lives in Vehicles and Why? Understanding Vehicular Homelessness in Los Angeles* in 2020, almost 60% of the city's unhoused population lived in their vehicle. According to that report, “Compared to non-vehicular respondents, people living in vehicles identified as female, White, and older at higher rates. The vehicular unhoused were also more likely to be in households with children. People living in vehicles reported higher employment rates and were more likely to be actively looking for work.”

According to the UCLA report, while women make up 30% of the unhoused population, they make up 46% of those living in a vehicle. While only 5% of the unhoused population were living with children, 18% of those living in a vehicle were living with children. A higher percentage of unhoused persons living in vehicles were unhoused because of domestic violence (10.7%) while 31% of those living in their vehicles reported suffering from domestic violence.

If a person who is residing in their vehicle loses it to a tow, recovering the vehicle is expensive. *Towed into Debt: How Towing Practices in California Punish Poor People*, a report issued by the sponsors of this bill, notes that the average tow fee in California is \$189, with a \$53 storage fee per day and a \$150 administrative fee. After three days of storage, a towing fee would be \$499. This would amount to over 33% of an indigent person's monthly income if they made the maximum amount to make them eligible for Medi-Cal.

Addressing homelessness. Housing programs are implemented locally, in varying economic, housing, and demographic contexts. As a result, there is wide variation in the availability, distribution, and growth of bed inventory. However, the shortage of beds is universal. The 2023 PIT indicates that CoC was able to provide shelter beds to all residents currently experiencing homelessness.

The challenges are highlighted by rising costs and limited progress despite increased spending. In San Francisco, where capacity has grown significantly, the city's homelessness department projected it would need almost \$1 billion more in funding to end unsheltered homelessness over the next three years. In Los Angeles, programs such as Inside Safe have attempted to address capacity issues, but concerns about high costs and the difficulty of tracking and improving longer-term outcomes resulted in city officials agreeing to an independent audit. Calls for increased transparency have grown since separate audits released in April 2024 found that both

the state and the cities of San Diego and San Jose have failed to consistently monitor program spending or effectiveness.

California voters passed Proposition 1 in March 2024 to approve a \$6.4 billion bond to build (1) more places for mental health care and drug or alcohol treatment and (2) more housing for people with mental health, drug, or alcohol challenges. In light of concerns about costs and monitoring—as well as state and local budget constraints—it will be important to make careful use of this and other funding for programs designed to address homelessness. Tracking spending, collecting data, and evaluating outcomes can help ensure that temporary and permanent housing programs are having their intended impact.

Vanlords. Based on numerous articles, cities throughout the state are experiencing situations where RVs are being used as rental housing on public streets. "Vanlords" buy unclaimed, impounded RVs cheaply at auctions, then either drive or get them towed to their location of choice. These RVs may be illegally parked, not registered, and not insured. The tenants may or may not have rental agreements and there may be neither landlord nor tenant protections. A Councilmember from the City of San Jose in one article said "We know there are bad actors out there that put dilapidated, nonworking van trailers or RVs out there, and then manipulate our unsheltered residents to rent these places in unsafe conditions, without any preparation for biohazard or hazardous waste or even a fire hazard."

Cities are taking a variety of approaches to address these RV encampments. For example, San Jose created an ordinance to outlaw these rentals. The city of Los Angeles drafted an ordinance to curb "vanlording activity" by prohibiting leasing and renting out RVs if they were parked on public streets.

Committee comments. This bill increases the value of an RV that may be disposed of from \$500 to \$4,000. Many homeless people are living in RVs. If their RV or the RV they are living in is towed, they face immense challenges in reclaiming their vehicle/housing and possessions. These challenges include receiving the notice that their vehicle has been removed, where it was taken, and the high cost to reclaim a vehicle. When someone experiencing homelessness is in this situation, they are likely to be left with no option but to reside on the street. Even if an individual is connected to a housing program, they may not end up in permanent housing. For example, of the 4,037 admitted to the Inside Safe program in LA, 1,356 returned to homelessness.

The author may want to consider including guardrails for when a vehicle may be disposed of when someone is residing in it. These might include: exempting RVs that are being used by someone as their primary home, allowing cities to implement this bill only if they have created sufficient RV parking for people living in their RVs, and waiving the towing fee for a person experiencing homelessness and attempting to have their vehicle returned.

Committee amendments. The author and this Committee have agreed to the following amendments:

- 1) When a notice is posted that a RV will be towed in 72 hours, the notice will include the statement that the RV can be recovered for at least 15 days after the public agency notifies the registered owner that the RV has been towed. The notice will also include contact information for an individual to learn where their RV and possessions may be recovered.

- 2) If the towed vehicle is a RV, the registered owner will have up to 30 days from the date of notice to claim their vehicle.
- 3) If after 30 days from the notification date the RV remains unclaimed, the public agency may provide authorization to dispose of the RV. The RV must either be inoperable, or if operable (can only be moved with a tow truck), it must have been towed due to it posing an environmental or public safety hazard.
- 4) Each jurisdiction is required to report to their local legislative body, on an annual basis in the preceding year, the number of RVs removed, the number of people found in the RVs prior to removal, the number of RVs that were operable, and the number of vehicles that were inoperable.

SECTION 1. Section 22851.3 of the Vehicle Code is amended to read:

(a) Not less than 72 hours before the vehicle is removed, the peace officer or the authorized public employee has securely attached to the vehicle a distinctive notice which states that the vehicle will be removed by the public agency. *The notice for a recreational vehicle shall also include a notification that, if the recreational vehicle is towed, it can be recovered for at least 15 days after the public agency notifies the registered owner of the recreational vehicle. The notice shall also include contact information for an individual to learn where their vehicle and possession may be recovered.* This subdivision does not apply to abandoned vehicles removed pursuant to subdivision (d) of Section 22669 which are determined by the public agency to have *an estimated value of three hundred dollars (\$300) or less.*

(d)(6) If the vehicle is a recreational vehicle, the notice shall also include a notification that the registered owner has up to 30 days from the date of notice to claim the recreational vehicle.

(2) (A) If, after 30 days from the notification date, the recreational vehicle remains unclaimed and the towing and storage fees have not been paid, and if no request for a poststorage hearing was required or a poststorage hearing was not attended, the public agency that removed, or caused the removal of, the recreational vehicle shall provide to the lienholder who is storing the recreational vehicle, on a form approved by the Department of Motor Vehicles, authorization to dispose of the recreational vehicle. Except as provided in subparagraph (B), the authorization to dispose of the recreational vehicle shall include a verification that the recreational vehicle is inoperable. The lienholder may request the public agency to provide the authorization to dispose of the recreational vehicle.

(B) If the recreational vehicle is operable, the lienholder may request the public agency to provide the authorization to dispose of the recreational vehicle only if it was towed due to it posing an environmental or public safety hazard.

(h)(2)(B)(i)(2) If the recreational vehicle is claimed by the owner or their agency within 30 days of the notice date, the lienholder who is storing the vehicle may collect reasonable fees for services rendered, but may not collect lien sale fees as provided in Section 22851.12.

(m) Each jurisdiction shall report to their local legislative body, on an annual basis for each notice posted pursuant to subdivision (a) in the preceding year, all of the following:

- (1) The number of recreational vehicles removed.*

(2) *The number of people found in the recreational vehicle prior to removal.*

(3) *The number of recreational vehicles that were operable.*

(4) *The number of recreational vehicles that were inoperable.*

According to the author. “Too many Angelenos are living in unsafe and unsanitary conditions inside broken-down RVs with no access to basic services. Meanwhile, our neighborhoods are dealing with the consequences of these vehicles being abandoned or recycled back onto the streets. AB 630 takes a necessary step toward improving public safety, preserving public spaces, and connecting those in need to better housing solutions.”

Arguments in support. On behalf of the City of Los Angeles, Mayor Karen Bass writes, “Unsheltered homelessness can take on many forms, including people living in vehicles. The 2024 Greater Los Angeles Point in Time Count found more than 13,500 vehicles being used as dwellings, including more than 6,800 RVs. The impacts of oversized vehicles, which are designed for recreational use, not long-term urban dwelling, are felt across our City.

While RVs provide a makeshift shelter for people experiencing homelessness, they result in harms to the environment and public health and safety including reducing roadway space on narrow streets; impeding line of sight at intersections and driveways; illegal discharge of hazardous substances into storm drains; occupying parking spaces in parking-scarce neighborhoods; and, in certain instances, contributing to crime and heightened risk of fire. Most importantly, people living in their RVs deserve access to a safe and affordable home.

In September 2023, I directed my Office of Housing to assemble a city-wide interdepartmental task force focused on addressing RV encampments and finding housing solutions for RV residents. The task force developed an internal report with a plan to tackle the issue, which included several recommendations for changes in state policy. One such proposal was to allow a larger number of impounded RVs to be dismantled and recycled rather than entering a lien sale

The California Vehicle Code states that the owner of any vehicle that has been impounded must be notified and given 10 days to reclaim the vehicle. If the impounded vehicle is valued at \$501 to \$4,000, the operators of the impound lot have 15 days to prepare the vehicle to enter a lien sale. The RVs are commonly bought by “vanlords”, who purchase multiple lien sale RVs for extremely low costs, sometimes as low as \$50. They then bring RVs back onto the streets and rent them out, perpetuating a challenging cycle.”

Arguments in opposition. The ACLU California Action writes, “In its present form, AB 630 lacks sufficient safeguards to prevent localities from misclassifying inhabited RVs as abandoned. Currently, there is no definition of what constitutes an “abandoned vehicle” that can be towed pursuant to CVC 22669(a). The Vehicle Code merely states that localities may tow vehicles that they “ha[ve] reasonable grounds to believe... [have] been abandoned.”¹ Without any statutory definition, some localities have defined “abandoned vehicle” as simply a vehicle parked in the same place for 72 hours or more, even though there is a separate Vehicle Code section (22651(k)) for tows for such violations.² In effect, by raising the low-value vehicle valuation for RVs to \$4000, AB 630 could easily lead to the destruction of many RVs that were just parked in the same place for 72-hours or more, regardless of whether they were abandoned or not. This

could lead to many people permanently losing their RVs, and – of particular concern – vehicularly-housed people losing their homes.

By raising the low-value vehicle amount for RVs, AB 630 would concomitantly increase the misvaluation of RVs deemed to be low-value by the officer or other local employee authorizing the tow. Under current state law, there are no requirements that the evaluator of towed vehicles have any training on how to properly evaluate vehicles' worth, that such evaluations be done by an independent actor, or that such evaluations are appealable by vehicle owners. In the absence of such protections localities could tow an RV of any worth, mark it as less than \$4000, and dismantle it. This is no errant concern. In 2024, for instance, the ACLU assisted a vehicularly-housed man in Santa Cruz County whose RV had been towed as abandoned and then immediately dismantled as a low-value vehicle, even though he was inside of the vehicle at the time of the tow and his vehicle had been insured at approximately \$20,000. Because his vehicle was immediately dismantled after the tow, he was left without recourse, and lost both his shelter and all his belongings. If AB 630 were to become law as currently written, such tragedies would only increase.

It is impossible to overstate the harm that the destruction of a vehicle used as shelter can do to a houseless person. Due to the exorbitant cost of housing in this state – which directly stems from the bureaucratic morass that local governments have imposed on affordable housing construction⁴ – there are tens of thousands of people living in RVs and other vehicles parked on public streets. In Los Angeles County alone, the latest Point-in-Time counts suggest that there are over 6,800 inhabited RVs people living in RVs or other vehicles.⁵ Many people in RVs work steady jobs but have moved into such vehicles due to high rental costs.⁶ If their vehicles are towed and dismantled, they'll be on the street, thrust into crisis by the government's actions."

Previous and related legislation. SB 692 (Arreguin) of 2025, would facilitate the removal and disposal of vehicles creating imminent health and safety hazards. The bill passed the Senate Public Safety Committee 6-0 and is currently in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

AB 2786 (Jones-Sawyer), Chapter 592, Statutes of 2018, clarified that the removal of a vehicle authorized by California statute is also required to be constitutionally reasonable based on the specific situation.

AB 478 (Ridley-Thomas), Chapter 67, Statutes of 2003, increased the maximum estimated value from \$300 to \$500 for which a towed vehicle may be disposed of.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

City of Los Angeles (sponsor)
California Big City Mayors Coalition
California Police Chiefs Association
City of Pico Rivera
City of Riverside
Downtown LA Industrial District Bid

Oppose

Anti-Racist Action Los Angeles
CD11 Coalition for Human Rights
Coalition on Homelessness, San Francisco
Corporation for Supportive Housing
Disability Rights California
Fair Chance Project
Mar Vista Voice
National Alliance to End Homelessness
National Homelessness Law Center
We are Not Invisible
Western Center on Law & Poverty
Western Regional Advocacy Project

Oppose Unless Amended

ACLU California Action

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