

## Senate Bill No. 2061

### CHAPTER 72

An act to amend Sections 912, 917, and 952 of the Evidence Code, relating to electronic communications and evidentiary privileges.

[Approved by Governor June 20, 2002. Filed with  
Secretary of State June 21, 2002.]

#### LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 2061, Morrow. Evidentiary privileges.

Existing law specifies that the right of a person to claim an evidentiary privilege is waived if the holder of the privilege discloses a significant part of the privileged communication or has consented to that disclosure, as specified.

This bill would add the domestic violence victim-counselor privilege to the list of evidentiary privileges to which this provision applies. The bill would also add a communication made in the course of a sexual assault victim-counselor or domestic violence victim-counselor relationship to the list of communications presumed to have been made in confidence and therefore privileged.

Existing law provides that a communication between a client and his or her lawyer is not deemed lacking in confidentiality solely because the communication is transmitted by facsimile, cellular telephone, or other electronic means between the client and his or her lawyer.

This bill would delete that provision and add a provision specifying that a communication between persons in a privileged relationship does not lose its privileged character for the sole reason that it is communicated by electronic means or because persons involved in the delivery, facilitation, or storage of electronic communication may have access to the content of the communication.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

SECTION 1. Section 912 of the Evidence Code is amended to read:

912. (a) Except as otherwise provided in this section, the right of any person to claim a privilege provided by Section 954 (lawyer-client privilege), 980 (privilege for confidential marital communications), 994 (physician-patient privilege), 1014 (psychotherapist-patient privilege), 1033 (privilege of penitent), 1034 (privilege of clergyman), 1035.8 (sexual assault victim-counselor privilege), or 1037.5 (domestic violence victim-counselor privilege) is waived with respect to a



communication protected by the privilege if any holder of the privilege, without coercion, has disclosed a significant part of the communication or has consented to disclosure made by anyone. Consent to disclosure is manifested by any statement or other conduct of the holder of the privilege indicating consent to the disclosure, including failure to claim the privilege in any proceeding in which the holder has the legal standing and opportunity to claim the privilege.

(b) Where two or more persons are joint holders of a privilege provided by Section 954 (lawyer-client privilege), 994 (physician-patient privilege), 1014 (psychotherapist-patient privilege), 1035.8 (sexual assault victim-counselor privilege), or 1037.5 (domestic violence victim-counselor privilege), a waiver of the right of a particular joint holder of the privilege to claim the privilege does not affect the right of another joint holder to claim the privilege. In the case of the privilege provided by Section 980 (privilege for confidential marital communications), a waiver of the right of one spouse to claim the privilege does not affect the right of the other spouse to claim the privilege.

(c) A disclosure that is itself privileged is not a waiver of any privilege.

(d) A disclosure in confidence of a communication that is protected by a privilege provided by Section 954 (lawyer-client privilege), 994 (physician-patient privilege), 1014 (psychotherapist-patient privilege), 1035.8 (sexual assault victim-counselor privilege), or 1037.5 (domestic violence victim-counselor privilege), when disclosure is reasonably necessary for the accomplishment of the purpose for which the lawyer, physician, psychotherapist, sexual assault counselor, or domestic violence counselor was consulted, is not a waiver of the privilege.

SEC. 2. Section 917 of the Evidence Code is amended to read:

917. (a) Whenever a privilege is claimed on the ground that the matter sought to be disclosed is a communication made in confidence in the course of the lawyer-client, physician-patient, psychotherapist-patient, clergyman-penitent, husband-wife, sexual assault victim-counselor, or domestic violence victim-counselor relationship, the communication is presumed to have been made in confidence and the opponent of the claim of privilege has the burden of proof to establish that the communication was not confidential.

(b) A communication between persons in a relationship listed in subdivision (a) does not lose its privileged character for the sole reason that it is communicated by electronic means or because persons involved in the delivery, facilitation, or storage of electronic communication may have access to the content of the communication.



(c) For purposes of this section, “electronic” has the same meaning provided in Section 1633.2 of the Civil Code.

SEC. 3. Section 952 of the Evidence Code is amended to read:

952. As used in this article, “confidential communication between client and lawyer” means information transmitted between a client and his or her lawyer in the course of that relationship and in confidence by a means which, so far as the client is aware, discloses the information to no third persons other than those who are present to further the interest of the client in the consultation or those to whom disclosure is reasonably necessary for the transmission of the information or the accomplishment of the purpose for which the lawyer is consulted, and includes a legal opinion formed and the advice given by the lawyer in the course of that relationship.

