

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 26, 2012

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2011–12 REGULAR SESSION

**ASSEMBLY BILL**

**No. 2149**

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**Introduced by Assembly Member Butler**

February 23, 2012

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An act to add Section 15657.8 to the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to elder and dependent adults.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2149, as amended, Butler. Elder and dependent adult abuse: settlement: gag order.

The Elder Abuse and Dependent Adult Civil Protection Act proscribes crimes against elder and dependent adults involving physical and financial abuse. The act provides for the award of attorney's fees and costs, and damages to a plaintiff, when it is proven that a defendant is liable for physical abuse, neglect, or financial abuse, and the defendant has also been guilty of recklessness, oppression, fraud, or malice in the commission of the abuse.

The Civil Discovery Act provides that it is the policy of the state that confidential settlement agreements are disfavored in any civil action the factual foundation for which establishes a cause of action for violation of the Elder Abuse and Dependent Adult Civil Protection Act. The Civil Discovery Act prohibits the court from recognizing or enforcing provisions of such a confidential settlement agreement in the absence of specified conditions.

This bill would provide that an agreement to settle a civil action for physical abuse, neglect, or financial abuse of an elder or dependent adult shall not include any provision that, among other things, prohibits contact or cooperation with the county adult protective services agency,

the local law enforcement agency, the long-term care ombudsman, the California Department of Aging, the Department of Justice, or the Licensing and Certification Division of the State Department of Public Health, *as specified*. The bill would provide that any such provision is void as against public policy.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: no.

State-mandated local program: no.

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

1 SECTION 1. Section 15657.8 is added to the Welfare and  
2 Institutions Code, to read:

3 15657.8. (a) An agreement to settle a civil action for physical  
4 abuse, as defined in Section 15610.63, neglect, as defined in  
5 Section 15610.57, or financial abuse, as defined in Section  
6 15610.30, of an elder or dependent adult shall not include any of  
7 the following provisions, whether the agreement is made before  
8 or after filing the action:

9 (1) A provision that prohibits any party to the dispute from  
10 contacting or cooperating with the county adult protective services  
11 agency, the local law enforcement agency, the long-term care  
12 ombudsman, the California Department of Aging, the Department  
13 of Justice, or the Licensing and Certification Division of the State  
14 Department of Public Health, *provided that the party contacting*  
15 *or cooperating with one of these entities had a good-faith belief*  
16 *that the information he or she provided is relevant to the concerns,*  
17 *duties, or obligations of that entity.*

18 (2) A provision that prohibits any party to the dispute from filing  
19 a complaint with, or reporting any violation of law to, the county  
20 adult protective services agency, the local law enforcement agency,  
21 the long-term care ombudsman, the California Department of  
22 Aging, the Department of Justice, or the Licensing and Certification  
23 Division of the State Department of Public Health.

24 (3) A provision that requires any party to the dispute to withdraw  
25 a complaint he or she has filed with, or a violation he or she has  
26 reported to, the county adult protective services agency, the local  
27 law enforcement agency, the long-term care ombudsman, the  
28 California Department of Aging, the Department of Justice, or the  
29 Licensing and Certification Division of the State Department of  
30 Public Health.

1 (b) A provision described in subdivision (a) is void as against  
2 public policy.

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