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The Robots Are Here! California Enacts AI Restrictions For the Workplace

California Employment Law on **October 21, 2026**

At the conclusion of the 2026 legislative session, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed into law three bills addressing how employers use artificial intelligence ("AI") in the workplace. Together, they place limits on AI-assisted discipline, restrict certain forms of employee surveillance, and require more detail in notices of layoffs caused by automation.

SB 947: Human Review of AI-Assisted Discipline and Termination

Beginning July 1, 2027, SB 947, the "No Robo Bosses Act," places limits on certain uses of automated decision systems ("ADS") to terminate or discipline employees. Perhaps most consequentially, a number of requirements apply whenever an employer relies "primarily" on an ADS output for termination or discipline.

1. A human must corroborate the decision using the information underlying the output or other supporting information, such as personnel records or witness interviews.
2. If the output cannot be corroborated, or the reviewer finds it inaccurate, incomplete, or misleading, the employer cannot use it to make the decision.
3. When an employer primarily relies on an ADS to discipline or terminate an employee, it must provide a separate written notice when informing the employee of the decision. The notice must say that the ADS was primarily relied upon, that a human corroborated its output, and whom the employee can contact for more information.
4. The employee may also request a meaningful, objective description of their own data used by the system.

The law also prohibits using an ADS to infer an employee's protected status or to predict and take adverse action against an employee for exercising legal rights.

Notably, this “No Robo Bosses Act” is narrower than a bill bearing the same name that was vetoed in 2025. Among other things, the prior version would have applied broadly to virtually all employment decisions (including hiring, evaluations, promotions, job assignments, etc.), would have covered independent contractors as well as employees, and would have required pre-use (instead of just post-use) notices in most applications.

AB 1883: Limits on AI-Powered Workplace Surveillance

Effective January 1, 2027, AB 1883 prohibits employers from using an AI-powered workplace surveillance tool to recognize, infer, or predict an individual’s emotional state or to collect “neural data” generated by measuring activity in an employee’s nervous system. However, the law also expressly carves out the use of workplace surveillance tools to ensure safety. As we previously reported, the scope of that safety provision remains an important question for employers evaluating these tools.

SB 951: Additional WARN Disclosures for Automation-Driven Layoffs

Beginning January 1, 2027, SB 951 adds disclosures to notices already required under California’s WARN Act when a mass layoff, relocation, or termination is caused wholly or substantially by AI or other automated technology replacing or automating positions. The notice must identify the number, occupations, and work locations of affected employees; the job functions being automated; and the type of technology involved. It must also state at the top: “This notice is for a technology displacement.” The Employment Development Department will publish summaries of these notices.

Employers should identify which systems influence personnel decisions, determine whether their surveillance tools analyze emotions or neural data, and account for automation when planning workforce reductions.

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