

The Right to Disconnect

Anyone tired of answering emails and calls from their boss after work may soon be protected by law in California.

A bill has been introduced in the California legislature that would give employees the "right to disconnect" from their jobs during nonworking hours.

Assembly member Matt Haney of San Francisco first introduced the bill, Assembly Bill 2751 in February, which would allow employees to disconnect from communications from their employer during nonworking hours.

If passed, California would be the first state to create a "right to disconnect" for employees. Similar laws have already been enacted in 13 countries, including Australia, Argentina, Belgium, France, Italy, Mexico, Portugal and Spain.

If the bill were to become law, it would define the "right to disconnect" as the right for employees to ignore communications during nonworking hours "except for an emergency or for scheduling, as defined." Both public and private employers would be required to create a workplace policy that allows employees the right to disconnect.

It would also require nonworking hours to be established by a written agreement and would allow employees to file a complaint of a pattern of violation with the California Labor Commissioner, which would be punishable by a fine.

Haney's "right to disconnect" bill has not yet been passed or signed into law but has been referred to the Assembly Labor Committee to be heard.