

# Recommendations by the Task Force & its Adoption

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## Introduction

California Assembly Bill 3121 created the Task Force to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans, with special consideration for descendants of persons enslaved in the United States. After hearings, expert testimony, historical research, public comment, and community engagement, the task force issued its final report on June 29, 2023. The report documented harms involving enslavement and its aftermath, racial terror, political disenfranchisement, housing segregation, unequal education, environmental discrimination, labor exclusion, health disparities, mass incarceration, and cultural marginalization. It proposed a broad reparations framework that included formal apology, restitution, rehabilitation, institutional reform, guarantees of nonrepetition, lineage-based eligibility administration, and methods for estimating monetary compensation for selected categories of harm. California has since enacted some measures connected with the task force's work, but it has not adopted the report as one comprehensive package or established a general statewide cash-payment claims process. As of September 30, 2026, implementation is therefore partial: important institutional and symbolic measures are in law, while many recommendations remain subjects for legislative, fiscal, administrative, and constitutional consideration.

## The Task Force Mandate and Reparations Framework

AB 3121 directed the task force to study slavery in the United States and its continuing effects, examine California's role in racial discrimination, recommend public education about those findings, and propose appropriate remedies. The final report treated reparations as broader than one financial payment. Drawing on an international reparations framework, it discussed restitution where property or opportunity can be restored, compensation for economically measurable losses, rehabilitation through health and social support, satisfaction through acknowledgment and memorialization, and guarantees of nonrepetition through institutional change. This structure reflects the variety of harms identified in the report. Housing discrimination, for example, involves lost property and wealth; unequal education affects opportunity; environmental exposure affects health; and political exclusion

affects representation and public power. The report also included methodologies for calculating compensation related to health disparities, over-policing and mass incarceration, housing discrimination, devaluation of Black businesses, unjust property takings, and labor discrimination. These methodologies were recommendations to the Legislature rather than self-executing entitlements, so implementation requires separate legislation, appropriations, administrative rules, and eligibility procedures.

## Eligibility, Lineage, and Administrative Capacity

One of the most consequential implementation questions concerns eligibility. The task force recommended a lineage-based community of eligibility tied to descendants of persons subjected to chattel slavery in the United States or descendants of free Black people living in the United States before the end of the nineteenth century. A lineage standard creates a direct connection between a reparations program and the population identified by the task force, but it also creates practical problems because slavery, migration, name changes, incomplete archives, and discriminatory recordkeeping disrupted family documentation. California addressed part of this issue through Senate Bill 437, signed in 2025, which directs California State University research related to genealogy and descendant verification. Senate Bill 518, effective January 1, 2026, establishes the Bureau for Descendants of American Slavery within the Civil Rights Department upon appropriation and anticipates a future process for descendant verification. Current Civil Rights Department materials explain that the genealogy division is to be implemented after the CSU research is completed. Privacy, appeal rights, evidentiary standards, affordability, and protection of genetic information are therefore central administrative issues.

## Major Areas of Proposed Repair

The final report contains more than one hundred recommendations addressing different forms of documented harm. Housing proposals respond to redlining, racially restrictive covenants, discriminatory lending and appraisal, displacement, and unjust property takings. Education proposals include historical curriculum, support for Black students, and responses to discriminatory discipline and unequal access. Health recommendations address maternal outcomes, environmental exposure, culturally responsive care, mental-health services, and disparities associated with unequal treatment and social conditions. Labor and business recommendations concern employment discrimination, occupational exclusion, procurement, access to capital, and wealth accumulation. Criminal-justice recommendations address policing, prosecution, sentencing, incarceration, prison labor, reentry, and implementation of the California Racial Justice Act. Environmental proposals focus on pollution, infrastructure placement, disinvestment, and community-led remediation. These categories illustrate why the adoption question cannot be reduced to one yes-or-no decision about a payment. Different recommendations require different legal authorities, funding mechanisms, implementing agencies, eligibility criteria, and outcome measures, and some can operate universally while others are

designed specifically as lineage-based or targeted remedies.

## Measures California Has Enacted

California has enacted several measures connected with the task force's recommendations. Assembly Bill 3089, signed in September 2024 and effective January 1, 2025, established a formal state apology acknowledging California's role in perpetuating harms associated with slavery and racial discrimination. Senate Bill 518, chaptered in October 2025 and effective January 1, 2026, establishes the Bureau for Descendants of American Slavery within the Civil Rights Department, subject to appropriation, with functions related to outreach, legal affairs, and eventually genealogy and descendant certification. The Civil Rights Department described the bureau in January 2026 as a permanent state entity intended to develop a process for verifying descendants and to support future reparative initiatives. Senate Bill 437, also chaptered in 2025, assigns California State University research responsibilities related to genealogy and descendancy verification. These laws create acknowledgment and administrative infrastructure, but they do not themselves implement the task force's entire reparations package. The California Department of Justice continues to state that there is no general reparations claims process or statewide monetary-payment program currently available through a state agency.

## Compensation, Fiscal Design, and Legal Questions

Monetary compensation is among the most debated elements because it requires decisions about covered harms, causal connection, time periods, California residency, lineage, calculation methods, taxation, interaction with public benefits, and funding. Supporters of compensation argue that government institutions can bear continuing responsibility for documented state actions even when present taxpayers did not personally commit the original wrongs, and that financial remedies can address losses involving property, wages, business value, health, and incarceration. Critics and skeptics raise questions about fiscal cost, administrative complexity, proof, legal challenges, competing public priorities, and fairness in defining beneficiaries. These concerns do not resolve themselves through historical evidence alone because they involve normative and budgetary choices that legislatures must make. A compensation system would also need safeguards against double counting, fraud, arbitrary exclusion, and loss of privacy. Clear written decisions and appeal procedures would be important because record gaps are themselves partly products of the historical systems under examination. The policy debate therefore combines historical findings with questions of public finance, constitutional law, administrative design, and distributive justice.

## Implementation Approaches and Competing

## Considerations

California can address task-force recommendations through several implementation approaches without treating them as one indivisible package. Legislators may adopt discrete reforms in areas such as civil rights, education, housing, health, environmental policy, property restitution, genealogy, or criminal justice; establish administrative infrastructure before authorizing additional benefits; or consider broader packages that link monetary and nonmonetary remedies. A phased approach can provide time for genealogy research, fiscal analysis, legal review, and evaluation, but critics of gradual implementation may argue that extended sequencing risks delay or symbolic action without material repair. Broader implementation could create stronger coordination across harms but would require greater immediate funding and administrative capacity. Universal social programs can also coexist with targeted remedies, though policymakers must explain the basis for any lineage-specific benefit and how it relates to documented state action. Whatever approach is selected, transparent criteria can clarify the harm being addressed, eligible population, responsible agency, funding source, privacy protections, timeline, and measures of success. These are implementation questions rather than evidence that one policy choice is inherently required by the report.

## Conclusion

California's Reparations Task Force produced a comprehensive historical record and a wide-ranging set of proposals addressing apology, restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, institutional reform, education, and guarantees of nonrepetition. The state has since taken several concrete steps, including the formal apology enacted through AB 3089 and the administrative and genealogical framework created by SB 518 and SB 437. Those measures show that some recommendations have moved from the report into law, but implementation remains incomplete and California has not enacted the report as a single comprehensive program or created a general statewide cash-payment claims process. The remaining policy questions concern which harms should receive targeted remedies, how eligibility should be verified, how programs should be funded, what legal standards apply, and how outcomes should be measured. Understanding the current status requires distinguishing the task force's recommendations from enacted statutes and distinguishing statutory infrastructure from an operational benefit program. The debate is therefore no longer simply about whether a task force should study reparations; it concerns the scope, design, funding, and administration of any additional legislative action.

## References

California Assembly Bill 3121, Chapter 319, Statutes of 2020.

California Department of Justice. (2023). *The California Reparations Report*.

California Assembly Bill 3089, Chapter 624, Statutes of 2024.

California Senate Bill 437, Chapter 755, Statutes of 2025.

California Senate Bill 518, Chapter 586, Statutes of 2025.

California Civil Rights Department. (2026). *New Year Brings New Laws That Build on Strong State Civil Rights Protections*.