

# California Mandates 'Gender-Neutral' Toy Sections in Department Stores

California continues to face a scourge of shoplifting, with rates of the crime rising almost 29 percent in 2022, according to the [Public Policy Institute of California](#). This trend shows no sign of abating, as the [2023 rates in Los Angeles](#) indicate.

Instead of addressing this pressing issue, however, California legislators have overseen the passage of [Assembly Bill No. 1084](#), which will punish stores with up to \$500 in fines for failing to provide "gender-neutral" sections in their children's toy departments.

The law, which takes effect on January 1, 2024, will require any department store that employs more than 500 workers, is physically located in California, and sells "childcare items or toys" to feature a gender-neutral section "regardless of whether [the toys] have been traditionally marketed for either girls or for boys."

Stores that refuse to comply will be forced to pay a civil penalty of \$250 for their first violation and \$500 for subsequent violations, the *New York Post* [reported](#).

The bill defines childcare items as anything intended to "facilitate sleep, relaxation, or the feeding of children, or to help children with sucking or teething," while it defines a toy as anything intended "to be used by children when they play."

Children are defined as "persons 12 years of age or less" under the new legislation.

The bill was backed by Democratic Congressman Evan Low, who,

as reported by [The Associated Press](#), was “inspired by the 10-year-old girl daughter of one of his staffers, who asked her mom why certain items in the store were ‘off limits’ to her because she was a girl.”

“We need to stop stigmatizing what’s acceptable for certain genders and just let kids be kids,” Low told the AP. “My hope is this bill encourages more businesses across California and the U.S. to avoid reinforcing harmful and outdated stereotypes.”

Ignoring the state’s shoplifting crisis and employing the flawed logic of a 10-year-old girl in crafting the bill are only two of the many remarkable aspects of the Golden State’s latest puritanical enforcement of wokeism.

A significant proportion of toys sold—whether sports gear, board games, movie merchandise, toddler toys, or outdoor play equipment—is already, almost by definition, gender-neutral.

Bill No. 1084, therefore, appears to be little more than virtue-signaling on the part of woke lawmakers in response to LGBT activists stirring-up trouble where none previously existed.

But the problems run deeper. By mandating a third category called “gender-neutral,” the state is inadvertently forcing the hand of department stores to clearly define which toys are *not* gender-neutral and therefore stereotypically *do* belong to either boys or girls. Ergo, Barbies will presumably remain in the girls’ section, while trucks and toy guns will remain in the boys’ section, further entrenching so-called “harmful and outdated stereotypes.” Is that not a step backward for wokery?

On the flipside, say a store decides to respond by designating all of its children’s products as “gender-neutral.” How can Johnny and his progressive parents feel good about their purchase of a Barbie if there is no gender aisle to cross in doing so—no rules left against which they can

revolt?

Underlying all of the contorted logic in California's shiny new bill is the simple fact that no one is stopping anyone from walking into any section of any toy department they like and purchasing any toy they like for anyone they like. In other words, why didn't Congressman Evan Low simply tell his colleague's daughter, "Actually, nothing is off limits, so go and buy any toy you like"?

As the editorial board of the *New York Post* [observed](#), "The fact is, gendered marketing for toys seems to bother whiny adults in deep-blue states far more than it does actual kids. This law will do nothing—literally zip, zilch, nada—to solve any actual problems."

So, as 2024 begins and Bill No. 1084 is seen for the dud that it is, what's next? Will legislators mandate that parents buy opposite-gender toys for their children? Will the state supervise children as they play with toys they don't enjoy?

Such questions are only partially sarcastic, given that the purpose of this bill is not to solve problems but to erode the natural, God-given differences between boys and girls and introduce confusion where it did not previously exist.

Here's a bright idea: Let kids be kids, let department stores organize their shelves as they see fit—and then let's all just get on with our lives.

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