

POLITICO CALIFORNIA PRO

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QUICK FIX

WORKING ON AUTOPILOT: Until now, California state officials have been in the driver's seat on regulating robotaxis — giving the industry room to experiment with the emerging technology on city streets and leaving local governments little room to object.

But a new bill pushed by the Teamsters Union in conjunction with local leaders would take exclusive control from the state, empowering cities and counties to impose conditions or outright reject autonomous vehicles by requiring local ordinances to be in place before cars can hit the streets, [POLITICO's Jeremy B. White was first to report](#).

That could constrain an industry that's been eager to roll out new vehicles and has so far enjoyed the support of Gov. Gavin Newsom, a tech-centric Democrat who rejected an effort last year to bypass state regulators by putting new limits on self-driving trucks.

The bill would harness a politically formidable alliance between labor and local governments in an intense debate over whether robotaxis belong on city streets. In San Francisco last year, concerns about vehicles snarling traffic and impeding first responders — echoed by Los Angeles officials — were overridden by state regulators, who approved them anyway.

As POLITICO's Tanya Snyder and Taylor Miller Thomas also report, opposition to robotaxis came out in force in the summer of 2023 as California weighed petitions by Cruise and Waymo to operate 24-hour, fee-based autonomous taxi services in San Francisco.

Transit agencies, city planners, community groups and police and firefighters united against expanded authorities for self-driving vehicles. They cited the vehicles' erratic driving and unpredictable responses to emergency scenes. An activist safety group drew headlines when they sabotaged autonomous operations by putting traffic cones on robotaxi roofs, paralyzing the vehicles.

For a deep dive on the politics and policy at play in regulating robotaxis, [read more in this POLITICO Pro Analysis](#).

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