By Don Thompson

RACIALIZATION California would mandate that all businesses require their employees and independent contractors to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, but this week, on a party-line vote, the California Assembly passed a bill by Democratic state lawmakers. The measure was immediately criticized by Republicans as government overreach.

Employers or contractors who refuse to get vaccinated or religious exemptions would have to be regularly tested under a planned amendment to the bill. New employees would have to get at least one dose of the vaccine by the time they start work and the second dose before the end of their probationary period. Assemblymember Buffy Wicks introduced the bill months after delaying an original proposal last fall. The previous version would have allowed workers to defer the decision about their vaccination status to their personal doctors. The mandate would require state health and occupational safety officials to enforce the new rule. It is the latest in a series of bills requiring or encouraging employees to get vaccinated, but that isn’t an opt-in, as is in her new proposal. Wicks and other support- ers of the mandate say the mandate is needed now as California moves to ease other requirements and anticipate moving into a new “endemic” phase that accepts the co-existence of disease. The state will become manageable as immunity builds. “That’s fundamentally what the bill is about,” she said. “Getting back to some sense of normalcy as we can because of the immunity we have now do have these constant inter-ruptions and outbreaks and all these things that we’ve been experiencing for acting.” The mandate would remain in place unless the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention determine COVID-19 vaccinations are no longer needed.

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