

2020 Legislative Session

The California 2020 legislative session has been like none in recent memory. COVID19 has changed the world and in California has resulted in a disruption of “normal life”. The 2020 legislative session was disrupted and truncated ending after the deadline of August 31st with babies crying, bills not heard and recriminations among legislators.

Let’s do a recap:

According to WHO, health officials in Wuhan, China identified the first human cases of the “novel coronavirus causing COVID-19” in December, 2019. It would become known as SARS-CoV-2 – similar to SARS (2003) and MERS (2012) but would be designated as a “novel coronavirus causing COVID19”.

The WHO on January 2020, declared this first outbreak of novel coronavirus a ‘public health emergency of international concern’.

The first confirmed case of COVID-19 in the US was January 21, 2020. February saw increased cases in travelers from China. By March –April, multiple cases had been identified – 793,669 primarily from community transmission. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6918e2.htm>

The US Secretary of Health and Human Services declared a public health emergency on January 31, 2020 and a Presidential Proclamation was issued on March 13, 2020 declaring an emergency.

Governor Newsom on March 4, 2020 issued a Proclamation of a State of Emergency. On March 19, 2020 – Executive Order N-33-20 was issued which put in place a “stay at home order or at their place of residence” and outlined sectors of “critical infrastructure sectors”.

ACR 189 passed on March 16th recessed the legislature starting March 20th until April 13th allowing each house to reconvene or extend the recess. Prior to leaving, the legislature passed one billion dollars for emergency funding, allowing the governor the ability to address emerging issues.

Assembly returns May 4th with Senate taking an additional week. Bills have been triaged to address key areas and committees pared down hearings. Key issue is the budget to address a \$54 billion deficit. Budget agreement reached and signed by Governor June 29th - \$202.1 billion.

Summer recess extended; Legislature returned July 27th because of numerous cases of COVID among staff and legislators. With only 3 weeks left in the session, bills and hearings are being shortened. Key issues: homelessness, housing, emergencies, mortgage and rent relief, COVID related issues – workers’ comp, paid sick leave and pay for unemployed.

For interested parties that wanted to participate, a conference line was set up to provide testimony; technical difficulties resulted in many hours to complete the hearings. The more “contentious” the issue, the longer the hearing.

Again more delays - August 26th a Senator tested positive for COVID19 resulting in the Senate closing down temporarily for the day. Thursday, all Republican Senators, except one, were self - isolating due to exposure their colleague at their caucus luncheon. Senate hearings were set for Saturday and Sunday to complete the approximately 100 bills still moving through the process.

Finally, in the early morning of September 1st, the 2020 legislative session ended but not without controversy, profanity and threats of a lawsuit on the Senate side.

The 2020 legislative session is without precedent; affected by a pandemic that resulted in many working “remotely” to adhere to the stay at home order, high unemployment, an exacerbation of a housing crisis, eviction issues, a resolution to shorten debate on the floor (unusual and eventually withdrawn) and businesses closed and unlikely to reopen. Many lobbyists have not been in the Capitol since March, accessing hearings and floor sessions using 2 monitors or tablets to keep up with Senate and Assembly hearings and floor sessions. To stay in contact I use emails, phone calls, attending GoToMeeting, Zoom and WebEx for discussions and information gathering as a means of connecting with advocates, staffers and committee consultants.

This epidemic has highlighted and made know the huge disparities within our society as well as the lack of an adequate and responsive public health infrastructure. Will these issues be addressed in the coming legislative sessions?

Bills sent to the Governor:

AB 2199 (Nazarian) - Extends the authorization for laboratory personnel who meet specified requirements to perform a total protein test using a digital refractometer in a licensed plasma collection center in this state until January 1, 2023, and adds a clinical laboratory scientist as one of the personnel who can supervise the person.

SB 275 (Pan) – requires the Dept of Public Health to establish a stockpile of PPEs Also requires health care providers to maintain their own stockpiles Analysis shows CA could have saved millions if PPEs purchased prior to the pandemic. 8/30 Amendments are more specific as to who is mandated to comply

SB 741(Galgiani) - This bill provides processes for petitioners changing their names and/or genders to update their marriage certificates and the birth certificates of their children within the framework under existing law for petitioners to update their own birth certificates.

SB 1159 (Hill) – Codifies the Governor's Executive Order (N-62-20) that created a rebuttable presumption that "essential employees" who contracted COVID-19 were infected on the job, and establishes the scope and terms of a similar presumption for infected employees outside of the

Executive Order. 8/30 Amendments more specifically define “essential workers and health facilities”.

Petition on Title 17, Section 1002 (a) (2)

Regularly we reach out to LFS for a status update. Since our hearing October 23, 2019 we have not been had any response from LFS. We extended an invitation to the Chief of LFS to join us at our March meeting, no response.

Because of the stay at home order issued in March and the subsequent drop in blood donations, a request was sent to the governor in March requesting an exemption to Title 17, Section 1002 which was approved and acknowledged by LFS. In July we sent a status request and included stats on the use of the telehealth waiver, we were informed that all regular order of business is on hold for the duration of the emergency. We will continue to send updates on the waiver.