



# Tidbits from Sacramento

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## **GOVERNOR'S ACTIONS ON LEGISLATION COMPLETED**

Healthcare and water have been the focus of the media, as well as those various entities engaged in the healthcare and water issues for the last four weeks of the Special Session. As you will recall the Governor called the Special Session to address these two extremely challenging issues. At the same time, hundreds of bills from the regular session were making their way through the process to get to the Governor's Office for his signature (or veto). October 14<sup>th</sup> marked the final day that the Governor could sign or veto legislation that passed the legislature during the regular session.

Nearly 400 bills were signed or vetoed during the final days before the deadline. In total, the Governor signed 750 bills into law and vetoed 214 bills during 2007. Many bills from the first half of this session are still "alive" and will be acted upon when the legislature returns for the remainder of the 2007-2008 regular session.

## **HEALTHCARE REFORM – IS IT HAPPENING??**

Many entities have been diligently working in various stakeholder groups in an attempt to find the right formula to restructure our current healthcare system. California has a "broken" healthcare system according to most Californians. However, trying to "fix" this system appears to be more challenging than expected. The Governor first released his Healthcare Reform Proposal in January. However, it was not until a few weeks ago, that actual legislative language was released. The first document contained nearly 200 pages and there was more to come.

A large contingent of the healthcare community and its affected entities have spent an inordinate amount of time and energy reviewing existing legislation, drafting new language, developing different scenarios and basically attempting to come up with an acceptable plan. When you are attempting to address the concerns of large and small businesses, unions, various healthcare providers, seniors, insurance and HMO entities, consumer groups, as well as state and federal government regulators, this is not just a challenge, it is a behemoth of a challenge. Tempers have begun to show, not a surprise when you are addressing a critical issue that affects the majority of Californians from all walks of life.

The Governor recently vetoed AB 8, the Speaker's healthcare reform bill as expected. In the last week or two, labor unions and consumer groups have taken a strong oppose position on the Governor's proposal stating it does not address health insurance costs and their concerns about

affordability for individuals. Other groups have also raised concerns with various aspects of the proposal.

The Senate Republicans recently proposed a package of 24 healthcare reform bills to be included in the Special Session. Their legislation does not mandate health insurance. Among their proposals are increasing the number of community clinics, using nurse practitioners to practice in the clinics, providing financial incentives to hospitals that refer ER patients to clinics, as well as other financial incentives. Their bills are in the Senate Rules Committee and have not yet been included in the process.

So where do we go from here??? It is clear, that there are still a number of critical issues that are unresolved. I expect that it will take a considerable amount of time to bring the various factions together to move the process toward a legislative solution. At this time, I don't believe that anything substantive will move forward in the next couple of months. Time is running out. However, healthcare reform and its financing will continue to be a major topic of discussion. I am sure this will all begin again in January when legislative staff, legislators and stakeholders are rested and ready to resume the dialogue

### **CALIFORNIA WATER PLAN**

Despite all the best of intentions, it does not appear that a compromise will occur anytime soon to put a water plan together. Initially 6 bills were put in by the Senate and 5 in the Assembly to address this issue. This is not necessarily a partisan issue. There are those that believe we can solve our water problems by conservation and limited water storage and those that believe that dams must be built to ensure there is enough water for drinking and for agriculture. While there was a great deal of hope that an agreement could be reached quickly on this issue, it did not materialize. It all "blew up" about a week ago. The issue remains, the resolution is not yet in reach. This also may be revived in January.

### **GOVERNOR'S SIGNATURE ON KEY LEGISLATION**

AB 106 (Berg) – Ensures patients 65 and older are offered flu and pneumonia immunizations upon discharge from hospitals during the flu season, provided vaccines are available.

AB 752 (Dymally) - Provides stabilization funding for public hospitals.

AB 338 (Coto) – Increases to 5 years under certain circumstances that an employee may receive aggregate disability payments.

AB 812 (Hernandez) Extends existing law related to the audits by insurers of workers compensation employer records.

AB 1073 (Nava) – Prohibits limits on the number of chiropractic, occupational therapy and physical therapy visits for post-surgical physical medicine and post-surgical rehabilitative services.

AB 1269 (Hernandez) Authorizes the Administrative Director of the Division of Workers Compensation to adopt and revise an official medical fee schedule for inpatient facility fees for burn cases in certain circumstances.

SB 238 (Aanestad) – Provides that federally qualified health center and rural health clinic services are covered under Medi-Cal and reimbursed on a per-visit basis. It also redefines visits for certain dental practitioners.

SB 220 (Corbett) – Relates to water vending machines and bottled water. Inspections will be increased for vending machines to ensure compliance with federal and state regulations. Also includes various requirements on bottled water.

SB 366 (Aanestad) – Removed a sunset provision allowing new imaging technology to continue to be used in California to detect cervical cancer.

SB 966 (Simitian) This bill addresses systems for the acceptance and collection of unused pharmaceuticals to keep them out of the waste stream.

### **GOVERNOR VETOES KEY LEGISLATION**

AB 8 (Nunez/Perata) – This is the Democrat’s healthcare reform bill. This veto was expected. There are several other healthcare reform bills in various committees that may be used in the coming year.

AB 1113 (Brownley) This bill addresses several aspects of the Medi-Cal program including revising resource standards for eligibility.

AB 1328 (Hayashi) This bill would have deleted a specified residency requirement for eligibility under the Access for Infants & Mothers Program (AIM)

AB 1710 (Swanson) This bill would have mandated that temporary services employees be paid wages weekly or daily under certain conditions. Allows an employee to sue under certain circumstances.

SB 171 (Perata) – Would have required each general acute care hospital to establish a patient protection & health care worker back injury prevention plan.

SB 210 (Kehoe) This bill would have established fuel standards relative to the greenhouse gas emissions

SB 533 (Yee) -Would have added another immunization for children entering school.

SB 557 (Wiggins) – Would have allowed specified doctors of audiology to be appointed as a qualified medical evaluator for workers compensation issues

SB 906 (Runner) – This bill would have allowed a provider of medical treatment, service or supplies to contract with an agent or assignee for the purposes of billing, bill processing, and other such services.

These are just a small example of the bills that were reviewed and acted upon by the Governor this year.