



Tidbits from Sacramento

Griffin & Associates
Legislative and Governmental Advocacy
"We Open Doors - We Get Results"

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THE 2009 LEGISLATION SESSION

The first half of the 2009-2010 legislative session officially adjourned on September 12. This has been one of the most challenging sessions in my memory. The issues that are facing California have escalated dramatically, helped by the overall recession that has plagued the country the last 18 months. Legislative leaders have had little time for anything except meetings, many of them “closed-door” negotiating sessions in attempts to address one of the major issues facing California – Water!

The Governor called for a Special Session to address the Delta Water issues several weeks ago. His Proclamation included:

- Protection and restoration of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta
- Address the short-term/long-term improvement of the water management and other systems
- Appropriate various funds to improve water resource management, build additional storage facilities, develop groundwater aquifers, flood protection and other ecosystem restoration projects.
- Place a general obligation bond and, as necessary, a lease revenue bond on the ballot

Negotiations were still ongoing and not quite ready for public hearings when the Governor announced his call for a Special Session. The Assembly is expected to schedule a hearing sometime during the coming week of October 26. Draft language has been prepared to present during an Informational Hearing before the Assembly Water Parks and Wildlife Committee. This will be an informational hearing only to share the draft language with the public.

The Senate has indicated they are still working on an agreement and expect to have language drafted shortly. They also will hold an informational hearing once they have draft language to share with the public, most likely next week as well.

It does appear that recently more progress has been made during the closed sessions. We may see some tangible proposals beginning this coming week.

WHERE IS CALIFORNIA HEADING?

Water is only one major issue facing California. Governance has become a major issue for us. The last budget negotiated and signed appears to still be several million short of our expenses. Projected budget revenues are not forthcoming as the business closures and the unemployment rates are double-digit. However, they are not escalating as they were earlier this year.

The California Tax Commission was appointed by the Governor, as well as legislative leaders, in an effort to propose major changes in our current tax system. The volatility of our current financial picture has raised some challenging questions relative to our annual budget crisis. We are limited because of the various initiatives/laws that have determined where California monies are spent. Approximately 40 percent of our tax monies are already mandated to be spent on specific programs. This limits our ability to determine the best use of our tax dollars.

The Tax Commission planned to have its recommendations completed by April; however, it was clear that they needed more time. Indeed, the deadline was extended twice – not an easy issue to tackle. Their report was recently released, but not all are happy with the results. My recall was the vote was 9/4 to pass the report.

CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION – WILL IT HAPPEN?

I received a history lesson when I attended a recent conference. California's first Constitutional Convention was held in 1879 – 120 years ago! This conference was well attended (it was free) and was put together by California State University, Stanford and UC-Berkeley.

We may be facing a Constitutional Convention in the near future. An organization called the Bay Area Council is spearheading the attempt to put a constitutional convention on the 2010 ballot. The Bay Area Council is primarily made up on corporate entities, primarily CEO's. They believe that this is the only way to "reform" California's structures. Others disagree.

CITIZENS REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

Every 10 years a census occurs to determine how many people live in California and where they are located. One of the tasks that will follow the 2010 Census will become the responsibility of the Citizens Redistricting Commission. Every ten years, California must redraw the boundaries for the State of California's Senate, Assembly and the Board of Equalization. This is to ensure that the boundaries for each district are "fair."

Following the 2010 Census that will take place next year, a 14 member Commission will be responsible for redrawing these district boundaries. If you are interested in participating in this endeavor, you are welcome to do so. Applications will be accepted between December 15, 2009 and February 12, 2010. Please contact the State Auditor's Office for an application. You may contact their office at 555 Capitol Mall, Suite 300, Sacramento, CA 95814.

LEGISLATION

The Governor signed 632 pieces of legislation that reached his desk during the 2009 session. A total of 872 bills were passed by the legislature. 240 bills sent to the Governor were vetoed. Many bills were stopped in their respective Appropriations Committees. Clearly, they were too expensive given our fiscal situation. Here are a few of the many bills signed or vetoed. Will include more bills in the next Tidbits.

SIGNED

AB 31 (Price) - This bill allows smaller businesses to participate in procurement contract up to \$250,000 if they meet certain conditions. Current limit is \$100,000.

AB 91 (Feuer) – Requires an ignition interlock for prior DUI offenders in certain counties

AB 108 (Hayashi) – Addresses the issue of individual health care coverage.

AB 260 (Lieu) – Mortgage reform legislation to address systemic failures

AB 398 (Monning) - This bill addresses the issue of Acquired Brain Trauma

AB 1383 (Jones) – Allows hospital fees to be matched by federal dollars to provide care

SB 117 (Corbett) – Sets forth eligibility criteria for Adult Day Health Care Services

SB 249 (Cox) – Adolescents at least 11 years of age are eligible for the meningitis vaccine

SB 186 (DeSaulnier) – Allows Pre-designation of Treating Physicians for Workers Comp.

VETOED

AB 2 (De La Torre) – Individual health care coverage rescissions

AB 98 (De La Torre) – Mandates maternity coverage for all health insurance

AB 244 (Beall) – Mandates coverage for parity for over 400 mental disorders

AB 513 (De Leon) – Mandated insurers to cover Breast Pumps & Lactation Consultants

SB 158 (Wiggins) – Mandated HPV Vaccination Coverage