



2020 Legislative Session Post Session Report (Draft)

COVID-19 and the State Legislature

As we all know, the COVID-19 pandemic altered life in California and the State Legislature was no exception. In mid-March, the Legislature adjourned for several weeks due to concerns about community spread. Upon their return, the Legislature put in place a system allowing for limited in person testimony in committees, enabling remote testimony via phone conference and legislative leadership directed legislators to reduce their “bill loads” encouraging members to 3-5 bills and limiting scope to three primary topics: State response to COVID-19, Homelessness and Fire Safety.

Well, filed under the topic of “Never let a good crisis go to waste,” one legislator’s perception of COVID Response is an opportunity for other legislators to advance policy priorities they were unable to do in normal times.

SB 1389 – A COVID Melodrama

Such was the case with many HR related, union backed bills, including SB 1383, sponsored by outgoing Sen. Hannah Beth Jackson (D-Santa Barbara) which sought to expand paid family leave law to include employers with as few as five employees, add an enforcement mechanism that would lead to unnecessary lawsuits and expand the list of eligible family members beyond current state law and inconsistent with federal law.

Just like the legislature, the UCAN chambers agreed to narrow our focus in 2020 to a core set of bills. UCAN joined a coalition of business interests aligned against SB 1383, led by the California Chamber of Commerce. UCAN’s job was to focus on our five Legislators in the state Assembly – Assembly members Bigelow, Cooley, Cooper, Kiley and Gallagher. After touching base with all five, we focused our efforts on Assembly members Cooley and Cooper – both members of the so-called Moderate Democrat Caucus (The Mods).

The coalition consistently engaged moderate democrat legislators who expressed concern about SB 1383’s impacts to small businesses in their districts. SB 1383 was such a concern to the Mod Dems that they took a meeting with Governor Newsom’s staff and Speaker of the Assembly Rendon to discuss their concerns with the bill....this was key since SB 1383 was a publicly declared priority for Governor Newsom, reflecting his definition of “California Values.”

SB 1383 was debated late into the night on Monday, August 31, the last day of the 2020 legislative session. In the end, SB 1383 was approved by the state Assembly 46-18, with several Democrats jumping on the bill after the 41st vote was cast - by Assembly member Joaquin Arrambula, who resigned his position as chair of the Mod Dem Caucus the next day.

You’ll be glad to know, the UCAN chambers held up our end. GOP Assembly members Frank Bigelow, Kevin Kiley and James Gallagher were joined by Assembly member Ken Cooley in voting NO on SB 1383 and Assembly member Jim Cooper abstained. All UCAN Chambers and their volunteer leaders deserve huge thanks for engaging with our legislators on SB 1383 – and two deserve special recognition – the Rancho Cordova and the Elk Grove Chambers of Commerce consistently engaged their legislators and demonstrated the critical role that united, local, constituent based advocacy plays in supporting the interests of small business.

Dem on Dem Infighting...

INAs the legislative session came to a close, infighting between Democrat leaders in the Senate and Assembly became intense....with many priority bills of legislators from each house failing to come up for a vote on the last day of session. The last day was also marked by the expulsion of Senate Republican members from the floor due to possible exposure to COVID-19 from one of the colleagues, Brian Jones (R-Temecula). Unlike the Senate which approved remote voting for their members, the State Assembly did not, which forced Assembly member Buffy Wicks to bring her newborn baby with her to vote on the floor, causing significant blow back for Speaker Rendon from a cross section of interests.

Status of UCAN Priority Bills (2 wins, 5 losses – 40%)

Below is a list of UCAN priority bills advanced in the 2020 legislative session...

SB 1383 (Jackson) re: Paid Family Leave – UCAN OPPOSE

Passed in Assembly, enrolled to Governor

Includes mediation option for businesses 5-20 employees. Expires in 2024.

AB 1659 (Bloom) re: Ratepayer funding for fire safety – UCAN OPPOSE

Held in Senate Approps

Budget Trailer re: Fire Safety Forest Management – UCAN SUPPORT

Never called. Sen. Nielsen will bring back in January.

SB 1457 (Borgeas) re: Small Business Relief, State Agencies – UCAN SUPPORT

Held in Assembly Appropriations. Sen. Borgeas plans to reintroduce.

AB 3279 (Friedman) re: CEQA reform – Administrative Judicial Procedures – UCAN SUPPORT

Held in Senate Appropriations

SB 939 (Wiener) re: Commercial Leases – UCAN OPPOSE

Held in Senate Appropriations

SB 806 (Grove)re: Repeal AB 5 – UCAN SUPPORT

Failed in Senate Labor (4-1)

UCAN Ballot Recommendations

The UCAN Leadership Group discussed and approved a set of shared positions on state propositions set to appear on the November 3 ballot. Of significant concern is Proposition 15 which proposes to taxes by \$11.5 Billion (with a “B”) million on business property, which will ultimately be passed on to small business owners and to consumers; and Proposition 20, which proposes to Proposition 20 would fix the flaws in Prop 47 and Prop 57, approved by voters in 2016 – and would define 51 crimes and sentence enhancements as violent crimes in order to prevent early release.

A complete set of UCAN Ballot Recommendations is attached.

Planning for 2021

The UCAN Leadership Group agreed to meet in mid-November (subscribing to all COVID-related public health requirements, of course) to begin planning for the 2021 legislative session. We hope to expand on our success, enhance our effectiveness and think outside of the box to possible grow UCAN and our influence within the State Legislature.

Contact

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