



California
CHAPTER

LEGISLATIVE REPORT #312

Legislature Extends Recess Until May 4th

April 3, 2020: This afternoon leaders of the Senate and Assembly announced the Legislature would not be returning on April 13th rather would now be targeting May 4th as their return date. Senate Pro Tem Atkins and Speaker Rendon jointly commented “Our priority continues to be bending the curve of infection. We must continue to support the efforts of our first responders and health care personnel.”

The leaders have also been communicating to their Members to reduce their bill loads to as few as five bills that will be allowed to move forward when they return also emphasizing the bills needed to be focused on addressing the COVID-19 crisis. The Chair of the Assembly Health Committee sent out a message this evening alerting Members of the Assembly Health Committee he would be reviewing all bills in his committee and discussing their merits with authors next week to determine if they would be heard in committee.

The Department of Finance, who is responsible for managing the Budget, sent out a letter this week alerting Members of the Legislature the budget for the 2020-2021 year would be a “workload” budget which would have very little if any new spending. The budget would be focused on the COVID-19 crisis. It has been discussed there may be “Junior Budget bills” in the summertime after the state collects tax revenue which are not due July 15th. Most insiders are expecting significantly lower revenue numbers from the unprecedented virtual stop in the economy along with the drop in the stock market. California's unemployment rate is expected to jump to over 20% as more and more people are laid off from their jobs.

The Governor declared a state of emergency in early March and has consistently used his authority to waive numerous laws. As discussed in the previous legislative report, the Governor announced waiving certain scope of practices provisions. Although the waiver on this has not been approved it is expected he will waive the supervision ratio requirement which currently says a physician may supervise up to four physician assistants and four nurse practitioners at one time. It had been rumored he would allow NPs and PAs to practice independently but that does not appear to be what will be approved.

He has also waived a number of laws around telehealth allowing wider use as a way for patients to continue to receive medical care while adhering to social distance requirements. As medical practitioners quickly transition to a telehealth model many speculate on the long term impact this will have on how medical treatment is provided in the future.