

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



Week of January 28, 2019

State Issues	
<p>Assembly Key Rule Change</p>	<p>When the rules of the Assembly were adopted in December, a tiny little word change may have a substantive impact on the Assembly’s work and shifts even more power to the Committee chairs. In previous years, when the Rules Committee referred a bill to a committee for hearing, the Committee was obligated to give that bill a hearing. This year, the Assembly-adopted rules say that a Committee “may” set and hear legislation referred to them (as opposed to “shall” be heard). This gives the Chairs the authority to shelve a bill without a hearing and without any reasons given.</p> <p>Speaker Anthony Rendon has always led with a soft touch and given his Committee Chairs a great deal of autonomy to run their committees as they see fit and as it meets their political needs. This is taking that stance to a new level. One can imagine that Speaker Rendon would have loved to have this rule in place during the Single Payer debate, when the buck stopped with him to keep that bill from being heard. In these new rules, the Speaker could have had the Chair of that Committee park the bill – and incur the ire and protests from the bill’s proponents.</p> <p>We will have to see how this plays out this year, but Committee chairs and Committee fights will be even more critical this year than in years past.</p>
<p>California Democratic Party Grows</p>	<p>Late last week, Assemblymember Brian Maienschein (San Diego) announced he would be leaving the Republican Party for the Democratic Party. In his statement regarding his re-registration, he said that “Donald Trump has led the Republican Party to the extreme on issues that divide our country... But his leadership is not the only reason for my change in party affiliation. I, too, have changed.” As a Republican, Mr. Maienschein was known to buck his party on key issues and this decision did not come as a surprise to many of his colleagues. Maienschein narrowly won re-election in November, defeating his Democratic challenger by a very slim margin of 50.2 percent to 49.8 percent.</p> <p>The Assembly now has 61 Democratic members (76%). And on a related note, the Senate currently has 28 Democratic members (70%), and it is expected to grow by one when the special election is held in June for the seat held by former Democratic Senator Ricardo Lara (now Insurance Commissioner). As many observe, it’s a misnomer to say the Democrats in both houses have a “super majority” – it really is a “mega majority.”</p>
<p>California’s New Surgeon General</p>	<p>Following up on an Executive Order signed by Governor Newsom on his first day in office, the Governor has appointed Dr. Nadine Burke Harris as California’s first Surgeon General.</p> <p>As Surgeon General, Dr. Burke Harris will urge policymakers at every level of government and leaders across the state to consider the social determinants of health, especially for children. Her work will focus on combating the root causes</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(more)</i></p>

<p>California’s New Surgeon General <i>(continued)</i></p>	<p>of serious health conditions — like adverse childhood experiences and toxic stress — and using the platform of Surgeon General to reach young families across the state.</p> <p>Dr. Burke Harris is a pediatrician and is the founder and CEO of the Center for Youth Wellness (CYW), which aims to improve the health of children exposed to toxic stress and trauma known as adverse childhood experiences. She is also the leader of the Bay Area Research Consortium on Toxic Stress and Health, a partnership between the CYW and UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital that furthers scientific screening and treatment of toxic stress. When Governor Newsom was mayor of San Francisco, he appointed Burke Harris to the city’s Citizen Committee for Community Development.</p> <p>The position does not require Senate confirmation, and she will be sworn in February 11th in Sacramento.</p>
<p>Poll on Public’s Healthcare Priorities</p>	<p>The California Health Care Foundation (CHCF) and Kaiser Family Foundation have just released a joint statewide poll conducted shortly after Governor Newsom was elected. The goal was to assess the public’s views of health priorities as the Governor and Legislature got to work early in 2019.</p> <p>In the poll, Californians rank making health care more affordable among their top overall priorities for the state’s Governor and Legislature, with 45% citing it as “extremely important,” just behind improving public education (48%) and ahead of affordable housing (40%).</p> <p>Among health issues, Californian’s top priorities are ensuring people with mental health problems can get treatment (49% say it is “extremely important”), making sure all Californians have access to health coverage (45%), and reducing what people pay for their health care (41%).</p> <p>Mental health access ranks in the top two health priorities for Democrats, Republicans, and Independents alike. Half of all Californians (52%) say their community does not have enough mental health providers to meet its needs.</p> <p>For more analysis, you can read the “5 main takeaways” that CHCF concluded via the link here.</p>

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