

# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



Week of June 26, 2023

## State Issues

New Speaker of the Assembly

This morning, June 30, there was the changing of the guard in the Assembly – one that has been a long time coming. Assemblymember Robert Rivas (D-Salinas) was sworn in as Speaker in a ceremony full of pomp and dignitaries in attendance, including numerous previous Speakers, Governor Newsom, Attorney General Bonta, and U.S. Speaker Emeritus, Nancy Pelosi.

Rivas takes the gavel from Lakewood Democrat Anthony Rendon after a very contentious battle that has fractured the Assembly members into the two camps. When Rivas challenged Rendon for the speakership more than a year ago, he did not have the votes, and Rendon refused to step down. After months of behind the scenes lobbying by Rivas and his allies, he was eventually able to gather enough support – particularly from all those newly elected members – to finally force Rendon to step down with a seven-month runway.

We expect changes to occur with this new leadership, with some already coming today. In his first order of business, he declared a half day for all Assembly staff – working to make friends from a very important constituency. Rivas will soon announce his new leadership team and bring in new staff members, including a new health policy advisor. While the Speaker is responsible for naming all of the Chairs of the various policy and budget committees, he's been silent on his plan for now, but the rumor mill is alive and well. There is some thinking he will leave most of the Chairs in their current positions through the end of this session (September 15), to minimize the chaos in what has already been an exceptionally chaotic process; but, we will just have to wait and see if/when those are announced.

The Governor has expressed a strong favor for Rivas, stating “I have a bias for him. He was there for me early, when I first ran for governor, when others didn’t want to jump in the primary. I’m a big fan of the incoming speaker.”

While the policy differences between Rivas and his now-predecessor are minimal, there are personality differences, and differences in the role of the Speaker in day-to-day movement of bills in Committees (with Rendon being exceptionally hands off.) Per Rivas’ camp, the biggest difference between the two is his Central Coast upbringing in farmworker housing may make him more attentive to issues impacting agricultural communities and others who live outside the Los Angeles or Bay Area metropolises.

Speaker Rivas has released a video clearly aimed at introducing himself to those who may not know his background, and also aimed at trying to bring together this pretty fractured Assembly. You can watch the video [here](#).

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Office of Health Care Affordability	<p>The Office of Health Care Affordability (OHCA) just released the video recording of their June 20<sup>th</sup> meeting, which you can access <a href="#">here</a>, and of their June Advisory Committee meeting <a href="#">here</a>. This was the fourth meeting of the Board of the OHCA since being established.</p> <p>The meeting included an Executive Report noting that they have been focused on staffing up and have hired 16 staff, with 14 recruitments in progress. They have hired three new Assistant Deputy Directors covering their three main areas of focus: CJ Howard will lead their Health Care Spending Targets work and is also responsible for public engagement; Margareta Brandt leads the Health System Performance group, and Sheila Tatayon leads efforts relate to Health System Compliance and has a health care legal background. They have not yet filled vacancies for a Chief Medical Officer, Chief Pharmacy Officer, and legal counsel, among many others.</p> <p>The Board meeting continued with several policy informational presentations. Staff presenting material on Alternative Payment Models, Primary Care and Behavioral Health Investment, and Workforce Stability. Staff and consultants also presented on the Cost and Market Impact Review. And finally, a follow up presentation on Total Health Care Expenditures Measurement was provided.</p> <p>They also approved three new Advisory Committee members representing health care workers and added one position to increase the representation from Organized Labor. Meeting materials and presentations can be found at: <a href="https://hcai.ca.gov/public-meetings/june-health-care-affordability-board-meeting/">https://hcai.ca.gov/public-meetings/june-health-care-affordability-board-meeting/</a></p> <p>The next meeting of the OHCA Board is set for July 25 at 10:30 and attendance is available in person or online.</p>
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