

# CalRHA Legislative Update



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## Public Policy Update

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As the January passes and February begins, the Legislature has reached, and continues to approach key legislative deadlines. One deadline in particular was on January 31st. This deadline required all bills that were introduced last year (the first year of a 2-year session) to be passed out of the house in which they originated. The most notable, and hotly contested bill brought up at this deadline was Senator Scott Wiener's SB 50, which would permit larger and denser housing near transit hubs. This bill had the backing of the Senate Pro Tem, however, that support was not sufficient to see the bill passed off of the Senate Floor. This was not a partisan fight, with both Democrats and Republicans having supported the bill, rather it was a geographical split. Senator Wiener who is a San Francisco based Democrat, saw heavy opposition from Los Angeles based legislators. All LA County senators but one either voted "No" or abstained on the bill with a number of them speaking in opposition during the floor debate. Senator Hertzberg spoke on the bill and said that Senator Wiener deserves credit for taking on this important issue, however, he had just confirmed with LA that this would impose new rules in neighborhoods for almost 80% of LA. Senator Stern said that while we are in a housing crisis, we are also in a climate crisis, and he expressed concern over continuing to build in the wildland-urban interface because of the detrimental risks posed to communities and businesses. His district was affected by the Woolsey fire and he opposed SB 50 because high fire zones are not explicitly exempt from the bill. Senators Durazo and Mitchell both spoke in opposition to the bill largely due to the tenant association opposition. Ultimately, the bill failed passage on a vote of 18-15, unable to reach the 21 vote requirement to pass. After the bill failed, Senate Pro Tem Toni Atkins said that she is personally committed to having a housing production bill pass the Senate this year. We can expect leadership and the Governor's office to be actively engaged in a housing production bill this year.

Another bill that saw an interesting death was AB 22, authored by Assemblymember Autumn Burke which would have declared that California children and families have a "right to safe, decent, and affordable housing". This bill was scheduled to be heard in the Assembly Appropriations Committee, however, it was pulled from the hearing by the committee. This is interesting because it was done so without the knowledge of Assemblymember Burke, an unorthodox move for such a high-profile bill authored by a Democrat in the deep blue California Legislature. Assemblymember Burke did not learn that her bill was pulled from hearing until she arrived in the committee room to present it.

AB 53 was another bill that died pursuant to this 2-year bill deadline. This bill, which was authored by Assemblyman Reginald Jones-Sawyer, would have made it illegal for rental property owners to inquire about, or require an applicant for rental housing to disclose a criminal record during the initial application period. This bill was scheduled to be heard in mid-January, however, the author ultimately pulled it from consideration during the hearing.

As we progress through February, we will come upon another deadline on February 21st. This deadline is the last day for members of the Legislature to introduce bills for the year. Traditionally there are fewer bills introduced in the second year of a two-year session, however, we can expect that close to 2,000 bills will be introduced by the February 21st deadline. A bulk of these bills likely will not be introduced until the week of the deadline. Our advocacy team will read through and flag all relevant bills to CalRHA, and begin the process to engage.

In addition to bill introductions, the Assembly and Senate budget committees have begun to meet to discuss the Governor's proposed budget. Included in the Governor's budget is significant funding to combat homelessness, with \$750 million of funding to implement the California Access to Housing and Services Initiative. Among other things, this will provide renters' assistance to those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness as well as encouraging development of new units in exchange for rental credit.

It is clear that housing will continue to be a dominant topic in the California Legislature and it is one of Governor Newsom's top priorities. We expect significant action will be taken this year through both legislation and the budget process. As the legislative process carries on, CalRHA will continue to monitor and engage on proposed policies that will impact housing the state and will advocate for changes that address the state's housing crisis, but do not come at the expense of rental property owners.

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